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# The Problem of Evil as Treated By St. Augustine

Faris Daniel Whitesell  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

AS TREATED BY ST. AUGUSTINE

by

Faris Daniel Whitesell

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in Loyola University,  
June, 1939

### VITA

Faris Daniel Whitesell was born in Vigo County, Indiana, August 11, 1895. He took his preparatory work in Emerson Institute, Washington, D.C., and his college work in George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from the latter institution in 1921. He was ordained into the Baptist ministry in 1920. He studied theology in the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary of Chicago, receiving the Bachelor of Divinity, Master of Theology, and Doctor of Theology degrees from that institution, the last named in 1931. He received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from William Jewell College in 1936. He began his work in philosophy in Loyola University in the fall of 1935. Since the fall of 1925 he has been on the faculty of the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The problem of evil is one of the most important to be faced in any system of thought. Evil is a fact -- an ever present fact. It demands some kind of an explanation. What is it? How did it begin? What is its purpose? Such questions as these are inevitable. The existence of evil makes an emotional appeal, as well as raises an intellectual problem. We feel evil, as well as see it. It is impossible to dismiss it either from our thoughts or our experience.

The problem of evil, in some respects, seems more difficult for a theistic system to explain than for any other. If we believe that God is all-powerful and perfectly good, the question naturally arises, why does He permit evil? If God is good, why is it necessary to have evil in His universe? If He is omnipotent, then He could prevent evil if He wished. Why does He not do it? His perfect goodness surely would move Him to use His infinite power to prevent evil; or if not that, at least to remove it speedily from the universe once it had manifested itself. The attributes of omnipotence and perfect holiness are absolutely necessary to any satisfactory idea of God, and the Scriptures reveal such a God to us. Yet evil is everywhere and always an inescapable reality. If all things had their beginning in God, then did evil also begin in God? Did He create it? How could He create anything but good? To those who do not recognize any authority in religion but reason, it appears that we must either give up the idea of God's perfect goodness or of His infinite power.

2

"Lactantius before the days of Augustine had reported Epicurus' list of the available alternative answers, in a trenchant passage which Bayle quotes: 'Either God is willing to remove Evils, and not able; or able and not willing, or neither able nor willing, or both able and willing. If He be willing and not able, He is impotent, which cannot be applied to the Deity. If He be able and not willing, He is envious, which is generally inconsistent with the nature of God. If He be neither willing nor able, He is both envious and impotent, and consequently no God. If He be both willing and able, which is the only thing that answers to the Notion of a God, from whence come Evils? Or why does He not remove them?'<sup>1</sup>

"The question of evil is as old as humanity itself. It enters into all forms of religion. It is the background of mystery in all human life; and, its shadow falls over that outward world of cosmical law which seems most removed from it.....

"A fact so universal and so painful, touching human life at all points with such a sore pressure has been necessarily a subject of much inquiry and reflection. Men have never ceased interrogating the mystery which lies around them and within them."<sup>2</sup>

"If the idea of immortality is the peak of man's aspiration, the tragic sense of evil is the abyss that ever threatens to engulf him and his ambitions, or at any rate to sober his self-esteem. It imposes a reconsideration of the values to which man commits his faith in himself and in nature. Pessimism and theodicy both reveal man's character; his tireless effort to overcome it. The characteristic worth of man is thus essentially bound up with this tragic enterprise, and upon the adequate conception of the nature of evil hangs the whole philosophy of value."<sup>3</sup>

In the attempts of mankind to explain the problem of evil satisfactorily we have had everything from Christian Science, which denies the existence of evil altogether, to Manichaeism, which personalized evil as a being equal to God Himself with a continual struggle going on between Darkness and Light and neither able to overcome the other.

## CHAPTER II.

### REASONS FOR SELECTING ST. AUGUSTINE FOR STUDY ON THIS TOPIC

St. Augustine made the most thorough study of the problem of evil of any early Christian philosopher. The Greek philosophers did not do much with this problem. Christianity recognized evil as a fact and produced a remedy for it, but gives us no philosophy regarding it. The Neo-platonists, the Manichaeans, and others held certain views regarding evil, but they were not well thought through, and could not satisfy a philosophical mind of first rank such as Augustine had.

St. Augustine also had personal experience with evil which brought him very realistically to grips with its philosophical aspect. His Confessions gives us a full account of his proclivities to evil as a youth, of his sexual irregularities, and of his strivings for self-mastery. His nine years of attachment to the Manichaeans was largely due to his belief that there he could find personal victory over evil and sin in his life, and that their solution to the problem of evil was the best. In this he was disappointed.

St. Augustine sets forth a philosophical and theological solution for the problem of evil that properly merits the admiration of all men, even though they might not agree with it. St. Paul had such a restless mind that he could not be satisfied until he had achieved an understanding of the harmony of the Law and the Gospel, and this was his great contribution to Christian revelation. Likewise, Augustine could not be content believing in the absolute goodness of God and in His creation of all things and, at the same time, believing in the reality and viciousness of evil in the universe. He had to work out a satisfactory intellectual solution of how the existence of

evil could be reconciled with the creation of all things by God. While he accepted some ideas of those who had gone before him, yet, in the main, he was a trail-blazer in his treatment of this subject.

Again, I have selected St. Augustine for study on this topic because his views were so widely accepted by the Church Fathers and Christian leaders who came after him. We shall treat this subject <sup>more</sup> at length in another chapter. In fact, it can be truly said, I believe, that his treatment of this topic is the best one that the mind of man can achieve when the Scriptures are accepted as a Divine Revelation.

A further reason for selecting St. Augustine on this topic is the fact that his writings are very extensive, and have been mostly translated into English, and it is possible to do research work in his writings more satisfactorily than in many other fields.

Also, the outstanding influence of St. Augustine on Christian thinking ever since his day made me desire to know him and his writings better. I wanted the inspiration and helpfulness that would come with an investigation of one of the lines of his thought. I have collected a number of tributes to St. Augustine made by various people down through the centuries to show the rank of greatness which he holds.

Possidus        "Possidus, Augustine's earliest biographer, laments the inadequacy of words to pronounce his hero's panegyric while humming this canticle to his hero's honor: 'Holy Augustine, seraphic spirit, image of Divinity, Father of Fathers, Doctor of Doctors, herald of truth, demonstrator of prophecies, mine of wisdom, fountain of eloquence, mirror of charity, equal to the Angels in fervor, equal to the Prophets in the revelation of hidden mysteries, equal to the Apostles in preaching, equal to the martyrs in desiring suffering, equal to confessors in teaching discipline and to virgins in preserving purity! Were all the members of my body endowed with voice, were all my organs converted into tongues, I should yet be unable to render due praise to so great a Father and Doctor.'" 1



Remigius

"Remigius of Auxerre asserts: 'The other Doctors of the Church can be compared to the stars; Augustine to the sun. As the stars receive their light from the sun, so do the other Doctors receive their light from Augustine.'"<sup>2</sup>

Zahm

"Zahm affirms: 'In the great African doctor we seem to have combined the searching and potent dialectics of Plato, the profound scientific conceptions of Aristotle, the learning and versatility of Origen, the grace and eloquence of Basil and Chrysostom. Whether we regard him as philosopher, theologian, or exegetist; as confuting Arians, Pelagians, and Manichaeans; or as vindicating the faith of the Gospel against paganism; or grappling with the difficult and obscure questions of Mosaic cosmogony; or fixing, with long and steadfast gaze, his eagle eye on the mystery of the Trinity -- the Doctor of Grace is ever admirable, at once the glory of the Church and the master of the ages.'"<sup>3</sup>

Remusat

"It is incredible," declares the historian Remusat, referring to Augustine, 'to what extent this genius, so rich and so cultivated, has furnished ideas and theories to all the Doctors of the Middle Ages. Before we attribute to any of them the discovery of a new system, we should examine the works of that holy Father, in order to ascertain whether the so-called new system is not found already explained in his writings.'"<sup>4</sup>

Euken

"On this point, Euken, the Protestant savant, is eloquently expressive: 'The great Bishop of Hippo is more modern than our modern philosophers. It is no paradox to say that Augustine will solve for us our problems in religion better than Schleiermacher or Kant, and our problems in philosophy better than Hegel or Schopenhauer.'"<sup>5</sup>

Mullany

"Augustine was born at Thagaste on the 13th of November, A.D. 354, a child who became one of the greatest men of all time; a man whose name and influence after fifteen hundred years is still potently felt in the world of men and letters; an influence that has been felt through all the intervening ages and will continue to be felt until the end of time, because he was so naturally human in his faults and failings, so supernaturally sincere in his repentant virtues."<sup>6</sup>

Philip  
Schaff

Philip Schaff in his "History of the Christian Church", says, ".....a philosophical and theological genius of the first order, dominating, like a pyramid, antiquity and the succeeding ages. .... Compared with the great philosophers of past centuries and modern times, Augustine is the equal of them all; among theologians he is undeniably the first, and such has been his influence that none of the Fathers, Scholastics, or Reformers has surpassed it."<sup>7</sup>

Alexander

A.B.D. Alexander of Scotland writes: "No mind has exerted a greater influence on thought than that of Augustine. No controversy of the age was settled without his voice, and his comprehensive systematic treatment of the doctrine of the Church became at once the standard of judgement and the basis upon which the structure of medieval theology was reared. He was the true teacher of the middle ages. In his philosophy the threads of Christian and Neoplatonic thought, the ideas of Origen and Plotinus, are united. He combines the old and the new -- preserving the best results of Greek philosophy, but infusing into it the Christian spirit and concentrating the thought of the times upon the great practical needs of the soul -- the sense of sin and the necessity of salvation."<sup>8</sup>

Jansen

"Dr. Bernhard Jansen, S.J., says, 'In wealth of ideas, there is no genius that can be compared with St. Augustine, not even Plato himself or Leibnitz, if indeed they can be compared with him in science and erudition.'<sup>9</sup>

Portalie

"Portalie, the erudite Augustinologist, says, 'Tradition has symbolized St. Augustine by a Heart, as it has symbolized St. Thomas by the Sun. For the former, truth is a real good -- not a mere object of contemplation, but an object which we ought to strive for, which we ought to love, and in which we ought to live. Truly, a Heart, the abode at once of love and of life, is the apt emblem of St. Augustine's love of living truth! His genius consists in the marvelous gift of embracing truth with every fibre of his heart, with all the powers of his soul: not with the heart alone, for the heart does not think; not with the mind alone, because the mind grasps only abstract truth, which lacks, as it were, the spark of life. St. Augustine seeks the living truth -- the vital verities.'<sup>10</sup>

### CHAPTER III.

#### ST. AUGUSTINE'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH EVIL

St. Augustine wrestled with evil in both its experiential and intellectual aspects as few have ever done. He knew the power of evil in his own life, and he faced the philosophical and theological aspects of evil fearlessly for some solution. The "Confessions" give us a full account of his experiences.

He was born at Tagaste, Numidia, North Africa, in 354 A.D. His father was a pagan, but his mother, Monica, was a Christian of the highest type. His mother exercised a great influence over him during her whole life. In his early childhood he experienced the power of evil and sin in his own life. He says,

"And yet, I sinned herein, O Lord God, the Creator and Disposer of all things in nature, of sin the Disposer only, O Lord my God, I sinned in transgressing the commands of my parents, and those of my masters. For what they, with whatever motive, would have me learn, I might afterward have put to good use. For I disobeyed, not from a better choice, but from love of play, loving the pride of victory in my contests, and to have my ears tickled with lying fables, that they might itch the more; the same curiosity flashing from my eyes more and more, for the shows and games of my elders."<sup>1</sup>

"For I saw not the abyss of vileness, wherein I was cast away from Thine eyes. Before them what more foul than I was already, displeasing even such as myself? with innumerable lies deceiving my tutor, my masters, my parents, from love of play, eagerness to see vain shows, and restless to imitate them! Thefts also I committed, from my parents' cellar and table, enslaved by greediness, or that I might have to give to boys, who sold me their play, which all the while they liked no less than I. In this play, too, I often sought unfair conquests, conquered myself meanwhile by vain desire of pre-eminence."<sup>2</sup>

He seems to have had a struggle with sexual passion and lust from youth, for he refers often to it. About his experiences when he was 16 years old, we find him writing:

"....and gathering me again out of that my dissipation, wherein I was torn piecemeal, while turned from Thee, the One Good, I lost myself among a multiplicity of things. For I even burnt in my youth heretofore to be satiated in things below; and I dared to grow wild again, with these various and shadowy loves: my beauty consumed away, and I stank in Thine eyes; pleasing myself, and desirous to please in the eyes of men."<sup>3</sup>

"Where was I, and how far was I exiled from the delights of Thy house, in that sixteenth year of the age of my flesh, when the madness of lust (to which human shamelessness giveth free license, though unlicensed by Thy laws) took the rule over me, and I resigned myself wholly to it? My friends meanwhile took no care by marriage to save my fall; their only care was that I should learn to speak excellently, and be a persuasive orator."<sup>4</sup>

About this period of his life, he returned from Madaura, a neighboring city, where he was studying grammar and rhetoric, and was sent to Carthage for further study. Here he fell in with evil companions and was enticed into deep sin. He says,

"Behold with what companions I walked the streets of Babylon, and wallowed in the mire thereof, as if in a bed of spices and precious ointments. And that I might cleave the faster to its very center, the invisible enemy trod me down, and seduced me, for that I was easy to be seduced."<sup>5</sup>

He appears to have had a rather unusual proclivity for thieving at this period, about which he writes:

"Yet I lusted to thief, and did it, compelled by no hunger, nor poverty but through a cloyedness of well-doing, and a pamperedness of iniquity. For I stole that, of which I had enough, and much better. Nor cared I to enjoy what I stole, but joyed in the theft and sin itself."<sup>6</sup>

His sinfulness continued at Carthage "where there sang all around me in my ears a caldron of unholy loves." He says,

"To love them, and to be beloved, was sweet to me; but more, when I obtained to enjoy the person I loved. I defiled, therefore, the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence, and I beclouded its brightness with the hell of lustfulness; and thus foul and unseemly, I would fain, through exceeding vanity, be fine and courtly. I fell headlong then into love, wherein I longed to be ensnared."<sup>7</sup>

"Stage-plays also carried me away, full of the images of my miseries, and of fuel to my fire."<sup>8</sup>

"And Thy faithful mercy hovered over me afar. Upon how grievous iniquities consumed I myself, pursuing a sacrilegious curiosity, that having forsaken Thee, it might bring me to the treacherous abyss, and the beguiling service of devils, to whom I sacrificed my evil actions, and in all these things thou didst scourge me."<sup>9</sup>

Between his 17th and 19th years, struggling in sin, but desiring a better life, he fell into the toils of Manichaeism. He found no help among them, even though he remained a nominal Manichaean for nine years. He writes:

"Therefore I fell among men proudly doting, exceeding carnal and prating, in whose mouths were the snares of the Devil, lined with the mixture of the syllables of Thy name, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, our Comforter."<sup>10</sup>

However, he was not utterly deceived by the Manichaeans.

"Yet because I thought them to be Thee, I fed thereon; not eagerly, for Thou didst not in them taste to me as Thou art; for Thou wast not these emptinesses, nor was I nourished by them, but exhausted rather."<sup>11</sup>

"I fell among men, who held that that light which we see with our eyes, is to be worshipped as a chief object of reverence. I assented not; yet thought that under this covering they veiled something of great account, which they would afterwards lay open."<sup>12</sup>

The intellectual problem of evil was now bothering him.

"For other than this, that which really is I knew not; and, as it were, through sharpness of wit, persuaded to assent to foolish deceivers, when they asked me, 'whence is evil?' 'is God bounded by a bodily shape, and has He hairs and nails?' 'are they to be esteemed righteous, who had many wives at once, and did kill men, and sacrificed living creatures?' At which I, in my ignorance, was much troubled, and departing from the truth, seemed to myself to be making towards it; because as yet I knew not that evil was nothing but a privation of good, until at last a thing ceases altogether to be; which how should I see, the sight of whose eyes reached only to bodies, and of my mind to a phantasm?"<sup>13</sup>

The period of his attachment to Manichaeism was always afterwards a deep regret to him. He characterizes this period as follows:

"For this space of nine years then (from my nineteenth year, to my eight and twentieth) we lived seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in divers lusts; openly, by sciences which they call liberal; secretly, with a false named religion; here proud, there superstitious, everywhere vain! Here, hunting after the emptiness of popular praise, down even to theatrical applauses, and poetic prizes, and strifes for grassy garlands, and the follies of shows, and the intemperance of desires. There desir-

ing to be cleansed from these defilements, by carrying food to those who were called 'elect' and 'holy', out of which, in the workhouse of their stomachs, they should forge for us Angels and Gods, by whom we might be cleansed." <sup>14</sup>

He provided himself with a mistress during this period.

"In those years I had one, -- not in that which is called lawful marriage, but whom I had found out in a wayward passion, void of understanding; yet but one, remaining faithful even to her; in whom I in my own case experienced what difference there is betwixt the self-restraint of the marriage-covenant, for the sake of issue, and the bargain of lustful love, where children are born against their parents' will, although, once born, they constrain love." <sup>15</sup>

"But I wretched, most wretched, in the very commencement of my early youth, had begged chastity of Thee, and said, 'Give me chastity and continency, only not yet.' For I feared lest Thou shouldest hear me soon, and soon cure me of the disease of concupiscence, which I wished to have satisfied, rather than extinguished." <sup>16</sup>

During this time he followed the Manichaeian idea that evil was a definite principle or substance opposed to good, uncreated by God.

"...but in this division I miserably imagined there to be some unknown substance of irrational life, and the nature of the chief evil, which should not only be a substance, but real life also, and yet not derived from Thee, O my God, of whom are all things. And yet that first I called a Monad, as it had been a soul without sex; but the latter a Duad; -- anger, in deeds of violence, and in flagitiousness, lust; not knowing whereof I spake. For I had not known or learned that neither was evil a substance, nor our soul that chief and unchangeable good." <sup>17</sup>

In his 29th year he went to Rome to take up teaching. He deceived and lied to his mother in order to slip away to Rome.

"But why I went thence, and went thither, Thou knowest, O God, yet shewedst it neither to me, nor to my mother, who grievously bewailed my journey, and followed me as far as the sea. But I deceived her, holding me by force, that either she might keep me back, or go with me, and I feigned that I had a friend whom I could not leave, till he had a fair wind to sail. And I lied to my mother, and such a mother, and escaped." <sup>18</sup>

About this time Augustine became interested in the Academics, philosophers who taught that "men ought to doubt everything, and laid down that no truth can be comprehended by man." <sup>19</sup> He was still thinking of God and evil in materialistic terms.

11  
"For hence I believed Evil also to be some such kind of substance, and to have its own foul, and hideous bulk; whether gross, which they call earth, or thin and subtile ... which they imagine to be some malignant mind, creeping through that earth. And because a piety, such as it was, constrained me to believe, that the good God never created any evil nature, I conceived two masses contrary to one another, both unbounded, but the evil narrower, the good more expansive ... And it seemed to me better to believe Thee to have created no evil ... than to believe the nature of evil, such as I conceived it, could come from Thee."<sup>20</sup>

He applied for and secured a position as teacher of rhetoric at Milan, where Ambrose was bishop. Here he listened to the preaching of Ambrose and was much impressed. The Academics unsettled him in Manichaeism, so that he abandoned that system. He became a catechumen in the Catholic Church. Monica, his mother, came to Milan, and under the combined influence of St. Ambrose and his good mother, he gradually recovered from many of his errors of thought and practice. However, he found that he could not conquer sin by sheer will power. He seemed to have two contrary wills struggling against each other within him.

"As for continency, I supposed it to be in our own power (though in myself I did not find that power) being so foolish as not to know what is written, one cannot be continent unless Thou give it..<sup>21</sup>

"After I had shaken off the Manichaeans and escaped, especially when I had crossed the sea, the Academics long detained me tossing in the waves, winds from all quarters beating against my helm. And so I came to this shore, and there found a polestar, to whom to entrust myself. For I often observed in the discourses of our Priest (Ambrose) and sometimes in yours (Theodorus), that you had no corporeal notions when you thought of God, or even of the soul, which of all things is next to God."<sup>22</sup>

His sensual passions would not down, and we find the following record:

"Meanwhile my sins were being multiplied, and my concubine being torn from my side as a hindrance to my marriage, my heart which clave unto her was torn and wounded and bleeding. And she returned to Africa, vowing unto Thee never to know any other man, leaving with me my son by her. But unhappy I, who could not imitate a very woman, impatient of delay, inasmuch as not till after two years was I to obtain her I sought, not being so much a lover of marriage, as a slave to lust, procured another though no wife, that so by the servitude of an enduring custom, the disease of my soul might be kept up and carried on in its rigor or even augmented, into the dominion of marriage."<sup>23</sup>

His inward struggles caused him to keep raising the question of the origin and nature of evil.

"But again I said, Who made me? Did not my God, who is not only good, but goodness itself? Whence then came I to will evil and nill good, so that I am justly punished? Who set this in me, and ingrafted into me this plant of bitterness, seeing I was wholly formed by my most sweet God? If the devil were the author, whence is that same devil? And if he also by his own perverse will, of a good angel became a devil, whence, again, came in him that evil will, whereby he became a devil, seeing the whole nature of angels was made by that most good Creator? By these thoughts I was again sunk down and choked; yet not brought down to that hell of error ... to think rather that Thou dost suffer ill, than that man doth it."<sup>24</sup>

Believing now that evil was privation or corruption of the good, the question before him was the source of evil. He writes:

Wrong  
views  
of God

"And I sought, 'whence is evil,' and sought in an evil way; and saw not the evil in my very search. I set now before the sight of my spirit, the whole creation, whatsoever we can see therein, ... yea, and whatever in it we do not see, as the firmament of heaven, all angels moreover, and all the spiritual inhabitants thereof. But these very beings, as though they were bodies, did my fancy dispose in place, and I made one great mass of Thy creation, distinguished as to the kinds of bodies; some, real bodies, some, what myself had feigned for spirits. And this mass I made huge, not as it was, but as I thought convenient yet every way finite. But Thee, O Lord, I imagined on every part environing and penetrating it, though every way infinite; as if there were a sea, everywhere, and on every side, through unmeasured space, one only boundless sea, and it contained within it some sponge, huge, but bounded; that sponge must needs, in all its parts, be filled from that immeasurable sea; so I conceived Thy creation, itself finite, full of Thee, the Infinite; and I said, Behold God, and behold what God hath created; and God is good, yea, most mightily and incomparably better than all these; but yet He, the Good, created them good; and see how He environeth and fulfills them. Where is evil then, and whence, and how crept it in hither. What is its root, and what its seed? Or hath it no being? Why then fear we and avoid what is not? Or if we fear it idly, then is that very fear evil, and whereby the soul is thus idly goaded and racked. Yea, and so much a greater evil, as we have nothing to fear, and yet do fear. Therefore either is that evil which we fear, or else evil is, that we fear. Whence is it then? seeing God, the Good, hath created all these things good. He indeed, the greater and chiefest Good, hath created these lesser goods; still both Creator and created, all are good. Whence is evil? Or was there some evil matter of which He made, and formed, and ordered it, yet left something

Whence  
is evil?



Why is  
evil?

12

in it, which He did not convert into good? Why so then? Had He no might to turn and change the whole, so that no evil should remain in it, seeing He is Almighty? Lastly, why would He make anything at all of it, and not rather by the same Almightiness cause it not to be at all? Or, could it then be, against His will? Or if it were from eternity, why suffered He it so to be for infinite spaces of times past, and was pleased so long after to make something out of it? Or if He were suddenly pleased now to effect somewhat, this rather should the Almighty have effected, that this evil matter should not be, and He alone be, the whole true, sovereign, and infinite Good. Or if it was not good that He who was good, should not also frame and create something that were good, should not also frame and create something that were good, then, that evil matter being taken away and brought to nothing. He might form good matter, whereof to create all things. For He should not be Almighty, if He might not create something good without the aid of that matter which Himself had not created. These thoughts I revolved in my miserable heart, overcharged with most gnawing cares, lest I should die ere I had found the truth."25

The problem of the source and nature of evil became a matter of greatest importance to Augustine, and he wrestled with it in deepest agony of soul. During this period of his life, he came upon some of the books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin. Their doctrine of the Eternal Logos proved a help to him. He arrived at a solution of the nature of evil, as follows:

"And it was manifested unto me, that those things be good, which yet are corrupted; which neither were they sovereignly good, nor less they were good, could be corrupted: for if sovereignly good, they were incorruptible, if not good at all, there were nothing in them to be corrupted. For corruption injures, but unless it diminished goodness, it could not injure. Either then corruption injures not, which cannot be; or which is most certain, all which is corrupted is deprived of good. But if they be deprived of all good, they shall cease to be. For if they shall be, and can now no longer be corrupted, they shall be better than before, because they shall abide incorruptibly. And what more monstrous, than to affirm things to become better by losing all their good? Therefore, if they shall be deprived of all good, they shall no longer be. So long therefore as they are, they are good: therefore whatsoever is, is good. That evil then which I sought, whence it is, is not any substance: for were it a substance, it should be good. For either it should be an incorruptible substance, and so a chief good: or a corruptible substance; which unless it were good, could not be corrupted. I perceived therefore, and it was manifested to me, that Thou madest all things good, nor is there any substance at all, which Thou madest not; and for that Thou

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madest not all things equal, therefore are all things; because each is good, and altogether very good, because our God made all things very good."<sup>26</sup>

"And to Thee is nothing whatsoever evil; yea, not only to Thee, but also to Thy creation as a whole, because there is nothing without, which may break in, and corrupt that order which Thou hast appointed it. But in the parts thereof some things because unharmonizing with other some, are accounted evil: whereas those very things harmonize with others, and are good; and in themselves are good."<sup>27</sup>

He came further to believe that the world of ideas, which Plato held to be the pattern after which things on earth are made, was in God. All things were in God, and were good when viewed in relation to the whole (Conf. VII. XV. 21), and that evil could not arise in the direct creative power or will of God, but in the turning away from God of a free will which He had made.

"And I inquired what iniquity was, and found it to be no substance, but the perversion of the will, turned aside from Thee, O God, the Supreme, towards these lower things, and casting out its bowels, and puffed up outwardly."<sup>28</sup>

Augustine was now 32 years old and still without rest of soul. His desires for worldly honor and profit had now largely been overcome, but his desire for the opposite sex bothered him.

"But still I was enthralled with the love of woman; nor did the Apostle forbid me to marry, although he advised me to something better, chiefly wishing that all men were as himself was. But I being weak, chose the more indulgent place; and because of this alone, was tossed up and down in all beside, faint and wasted with withering cares, because in other matters, I was constrained against my will to conform myself to a married life, to which I was given up and enthralled."<sup>29</sup>

Augustine was now under definitely Christian influences. Simplicianus, a Christian friend, told him the story of the conversion of Victorinus, the translator of the Platonist writings from Greek to Latin. This stirred in Augustine the longing to have a similar experience. He found his will bound.

"Which thing I was sighing for, bound as I was, not with another's irons, but by my own iron will. My will the enemy held, and thence had made a chain for me, and bound me. For of a froward will, was a lust made; and a lust served, became custom; and custom not resisted, became necessity.

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By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I called it a chain) a hard bondage held me enthralled. But that new will which had begun to be in me, freely to serve Thee, and to wish to enjoy Thee, O God, the only assured pleasantness, was not yet able to overcome my former willfulness, strengthened by age. Thus did my two wills, one new, and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual, struggle within me; and by their discord, undid my soul."<sup>30</sup>

This inward yearning to give himself wholly to God continued for some time.

The things of the old life were hard to cast off.

"The very toys of toys, and vanities of vanities, my ancient mistresses, still held me; they plucked my fleshly garment, and whispered softly, 'Dost thou cast us off? and from that moment shall we no more be with thee forever? and from that moment shall not this or that be lawful for thee forever?' And what was it which they suggested in that I said, 'this or that,' what did they suggest, O my God? Let Thy mercy turn it away from the soul of Thy servant. What defilements did they suggest! What shame! And now I must less than half heard them, and not openly shewing themselves and contradicting me, but muttering as it were behind my back, and privily plucking me, as I was departing, but to look back on them. Yet they did retard me, so that I hesitated to burst and shake myself free from them, and to spring over whither I was called; a violent habit saying to me, 'Thinkest thou, thou canst live without them?'"<sup>31</sup>

His conversion soon followed, after which he determined to devote his life to God and to abandon his profession of Rhetoric. His conversion seems to have meant a vital change in his life. He says,

"What evil have not been either my deeds, or if not my deeds, my words, or if not my words, my will? But Thou, O Lord, art good and merciful, and Thy right hand had respect unto the depth of my death, and from the bottom of my heart emptied that abyss of corruption. And this Thy whole gift was, to nill what I willed, and to will what Thou willedst. But where through all those years, and out of what low and deep recess was my free will called forth in a moment, whereby to submit my neck to Thy easy yoke, and my shoulders unto Thy light burden, O Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer? How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetness of those toys! and what I feared to be departed from, was now a joy to part with. For Thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou true and highest sweetness. Thou castest them forth, and for them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure, but though not to flesh and blood; brighter than all light, but more hidden than all depths, higher than all honor, but not to the high in their own conceits. Now was my soul free from the biting cares of canvassing and getting, and weltering in filth, and scratching off the itch of lust."<sup>32</sup>

After conversion, he retired to the country for a while, prepared for baptism,

which along with Adeodatus and Alypius, he received during Lent of 387 A. D. From this time onward his struggles with sin and evil were with the more subtle forms, not with the coarse and debasing as previously. Thus he grew in grace and in victory over indwelling sin. In Book X of the Confessions he discusses some of his temptations under the division of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride. The memories of his former sins haunted him and were hard to put away.

"Verily Thou enjoinest me continency from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the ambition of the world\* ... But yet there live in my memory the images of such things, as my ill custom there fixed; which haunt me, strengthless when I am awake; but in sleep, not only so as to give pleasure, but even to obtain assent, and what is very like reality. Yea, so far prevails the illusion of the image, in my soul and in my flesh, that when asleep, false visions persuade to that which when waking the true cannot."<sup>32</sup>

He saw that one could sin in eating and drinking.

"Placed then amid these temptations, I strive daily against concupiscence in eating and drinking. For it is not of such nature, that I can settle on cutting it off once for all, and never touching it afterward, as I could of concubinage. The bridle of the throat then is to be held attempered between slackness and stiffness."<sup>34</sup>

His progress in victory over former evil habits and attitudes is revealed in the following:

"In this so vast wilderness, full of snares and dangers, behold many of them I have cut off, and thrust out of my heart, as Thou hast given me, O God of my salvation. And yet when dare I say, since so many things of this kind buzz on all sides about our daily life -- when dare I say, that nothing of this sort engages my attention, or causes in me an idle interest? True the theatres do not now carry me away, nor care I to know the courses of the stars, nor did my soul ever consult ghosts departed; all sacrilegious mysteries I detest. ... Notwithstanding, in how many most petty and contemptible things is our curiosity daily tempted, and how often we give away, who can recount?"<sup>35</sup>

It would seem that St. Augustine was more keenly introspective than most people ever are, and that, as a result, he was dissatisfied with his spiritual attainments where most others would have been satisfied. The following passage seems to bear this out:

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"By these temptations we are assailed daily, O Lord; without ceasing are we assailed. Our daily furnace is the tongue of men. And in this way also Thou commandest us continence. Give what Thou enjoine<sup>st</sup>, and enjoin what Thou wilt. Thou knowest on this matter the groans of my heart, and the floods of mine eyes. For I cannot learn how far I am more cleansed from this plague, and I much fear my secret sins, which Thine eyes know, mine do not. For in other kinds of temptations I have some sort of means of examining myself; in this, scarce any. For, in refraining my mind from the pleasures of the flesh, and idly curiosity, I see how much I have attained to, when I do without them; foregoing, or not having them. For then I ask myself how much more or less troublesome it is to me, not to have them. Then, riches, which are desired, that they may serve to some one or two or all of the three concupiscences, if the soul cannot discern, whether, when it hath them it despiseth them, they may be cast aside, that so it may prove itself." 36

In 410 A. D. the city of Rome had been stormed and sacked by the Goths under Alaric, their king. They pressed on in their conquests and came as far as Hippo at the time of Augustine's decease. The fall of the Empire seemed the worst possible calamity to most Christians. The pagans in the Empire attributed the success of the barbarians to the fact that the ancient gods of Rome had been abandoned in favor of Christianity. This was another aspect of evil in the world. In Augustine's great work, The City of God, the first five books, he seeks to offset the view that polytheism is necessary for worldly prosperity.

Thus, we see that Augustine's experiences with evil and sin were such as to drive him to a thorough study of the whole problem. We do not mean to imply that his theory of evil was the mere result of his temperament or of his sins. Many men have sinned like Augustine, but their intellects have only been benumbed and they have been led into all manner of unbelief. It was the Holy Spirit who took possession of his temperament and mind, and so overruled his sin as to make it a glass through which he saw the depths of his nature, the nature of God, and the nature and origin of sin.

## CHAPTER IV.

## INFLUENCES BEARING UPON ST. AUGUSTINE'S VIEW OF EVIL

St. Augustine was subject to the influence of others in many of his theological and philosophical ideas, and no doubt some of these influences helped him to a solution of the problem of evil. Yet, my opinion is that he did considerable original thinking on the problem of evil.

Two potent influences of his early life were his mother and the writings of Cicero. The Christian teachings of his mother made him sensitive to evil but gave him no particular help in a philosophical understanding of the problem of evil. The writings of Cicero stirred in him a love for knowledge, which never left him, and which ultimately drove him to his solution of this problem, but Cicero gave him no direct help.

Augustine was well acquainted with the Greek philosophers. He did not read Greek very well, so his knowledge of the Greeks came mostly through the Latin translations. It is doubtful that Augustine received any help from the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. They were mostly interested in the material and naturalistic aspects of philosophy and touched very lightly on the problem of evil.

Aristotle says that the Pythagoreans taught that the evil partakes of the nature of the unlimited, and the good of the limited (Eth. Nic. ii.5; 1106b29).

The following quotations from Heraclitus give his view:

"46. Opposition unites. From what draws apart results the most beautiful harmony. All things take place by strife.

"57. Good and bad are the same."<sup>1</sup>

However, Diels' rendering of the fragments, as given by Bakewell, reports Heraclitus as follows:

"8. Opposition brings men together, and out of discord comes the fairest harmony, and all things have their birth in strife." (Same as 46 above)

"60. The way up and the way down is one and the same." (This is evidently the same as 57 above)

"80. We ought to know that war is the common lot, and that justice is strife, and that all things arise through strife and necessity."

"102. To God all things are beautiful and good and right; men deem some things wrong and some right."

"111. It is disease that makes health pleasant; evil, good; hunger, plenty; weariness, rest."<sup>2</sup>

From Aristotle, we find the following about the view of Empedocles:

"For if we were to follow out the view of Empedocles, and interpret it according to its meaning and not according to its lispig expression, we should find that friendship is the cause of good things, and strife of bad."<sup>3</sup>

Democritus taught that "the cause of sin is ignorance of the better."<sup>4</sup> And

Diels' report of The Golden Sayings of Democritus contains the following on our point:

"108. Seek after the good, and with much toil shall ye find it; the evil turns up of itself without your seeking it."

"160. An evil and foolish and intemperate and irreligious life should not be called a bad life, but rather dying long drawn out."

"191. Men achieve tranquillity through moderation in pleasure and through the symmetry of life. Want and superfluity are apt to upset them and to cause great perturbations in the soul. The souls that are rent by violent conflicts are neither stable nor tranquil. One should therefore set his mind upon the things that are within his power, and be content with his opportunities, nor let his memory dwell very long on the envied and admired of men, nor idly sit and dream of them. ..."<sup>5</sup>

Socrates in the Euthydemus 280 shows that it is the way a thing is used which determines whether it is good or bad for us; even spiritual merits, such as courage and inherent stability of being, can become evil through misuse. The only unconditioned good is the insight into what is beneficial for us, since it guides us in the right use of our abilities and assures us of our possessions. The only evil is incorrigible vain conceit and intellectual

indolence.<sup>6</sup> Xenophon's Memorabilia I.6.10 gives Socrates' view of human perfection as follows:

"You, Antipho, seem to think that happiness consists in luxury and extravagance; but I think that to want nothing is to resemble the gods, and that to want as little as possible is to make the nearest approach to the gods; that the Divine nature is perfection, and that to be nearest to the Divine nature is to be nearest to perfection."

Plato had more influence on Augustine than any of the other Greek philosophers. There seems to be some question as to whether Plato's influence on Augustine was direct or whether it was indirect through the Neoplatonists. My impression is that the major influence was indirect through the Neoplatonists, but that there must have been some direct influence too. Some of Augustine's views on evil are similar, if not identical, with those of Plato, e.g., that God is not the author of evil. Plato says:

"The good is not the cause of all things, but of the good only, and not the cause of evil?

Assuredly.

"Then God, if He be good, is not the author of all things as the many assert, but He is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men; for few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good only is to be attributed to him: of the evil other causes have to be discovered." (Rep., 379d; also, 380b, 391c)

Plato's optimism is seen in the following from the Timaeus:

"Timaeus. Let me tell you then, why the creator of the world generated and created this universe. He was good and no goodness can ever have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible. .... God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad as far as this could be accomplished. ... Now he who is the best neither creates or ever has created anything but the fairest, and reflecting upon the visible works of nature, he found that no intelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not exist in anything which was devoid of soul. For these reasons he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, and framed the universe to be the best and fairest work in the order of nature." (Timaeus, 30)

Plato, then would consider this the best possible world, under the circumstances, which is somewhat like Augustine's view that it is better to permit



evil than to have a world without it; though Augustine had different reasons for his view than Plato had for his. Plato found it necessary to attribute evil to a different soul than that to which he attributed good, since he supposed soul to be the cause of all things. In the Laws, we find this:

"Athenian. In the next place, must we not of necessity admit that the soul is the cause of good and evil, base and honorable, just and unjust and of all other opposites, if we suppose her to be the cause of all things?"

"Cleinias. Certainly."

"Athenian. And as the soul orders and inhabits all things moving every way, must we not say that she orders also the heavens?"

"Cleinias. Of course."

"Athenian. One soul or more? More than one -- I will answer for you; at any rate, we must not suppose that there are less than two -- one the author of good, and the other of evil."

"Cleinias. Very true."

"Athenian. Yes, very true; the soul then directs all things in heaven and earth and sea by her movements." (Laws, X, 896c)

Augustine would not attribute evil to God, but to the free will of creature intelligence. Augustine, however, did not find it necessary to have a principle of evil as well as a principle of good, as did Plato. For Augustine, God created all things good, and evil was not created by God or any other being or principle, but originated in the lapsing back toward nothingness of that which was created good. Augustine believed in the continued opposition of evil to good until the end of the present world and the judgement of mankind. Plato appeared to hold that evil must continue to exist as the opposite of the good as seen from Theaetetus, 176, as follows:

"Theodorus. If you could only persuade everybody, Socrates, as you do me, of the truth of your words, there would be more peace and fewer evils among men."

"Socrates. Evils, Theodorus, can never perish; for there must always remain something which is antagonist to good. Of necessity, they hover around this mortal sphere and the earthly nature, having no place among the gods in heaven. ... Let them hear the truth: In God is no unrighteousness at all -- he is altogether righteous; and there is nothing more like him than he is of us, who is the most righteous...."

laws to his creatures, that he might be guiltless of their future evil, he sowed some of them in the earth, and some in the moon, and some in the stars which are the measures of time;..."

In Nourrisson's two-volume work entitled La Philosophie de St. Augustin, there is a chapter entitled, "Des Sources Grecques et Orientales de la Philosophie de S. Augustin", in which he says the following regarding Platonic influence on Augustin's theory of evil:

"Quoi qu'il en soit, nul doute qu'Augustin n'ait, à tout le moins, dérivé du Platonisme les éléments de sa théologie naturelle. Ce fut grâce à Platon, par exemple, qu'il parvint à concevoir Dieu comme une lumière incorporelle. C'est ainsi encore que les principes de son optimisme sont des principes tout platoniciens. Que le bien, en effet, vienne de Dieu; que le mal vienne de l'homme et des abus de la liberté; que Dieu, enfin, en permettant le mal, l'ait prévu, et que sa providence le fasse tourner au bien, telle est la doctrine de Platon sur l'origine du mal. Tels sont aussi les enseignements que professe Augustin. L'un et l'autre, en dernière analyse, conçoivent l'ordre moral comme l'ordre supérieur des choses."

Aristotle did not deal very explicitly with the question of evil. He mostly refers to what others say about it and criticizes them. He held that the actual is worse than the potential, and that evil does not exist apart from evil things; that in eternal things there is nothing evil, as seen in the following from his Metaphysics:

"Also in the case of bad things the end or actuality must be worse than the potency; for that which 'can' is both contraries alike. Clearly, then, the bad does not exist apart from bad things for the bad is in its nature posterior to potency. And therefore we may also say that in the things which are from the beginning, i.e., in eternal things, there is nothing bad, nothing defective, nothing perverted (for perversion is something bad)."

Aristotle held that happiness is something final and self-sufficing and is the end of all that man does;<sup>10</sup> and that the human will is entirely free to choose between virtue and vice, as seen in his Ethics, III.5.1, as follows:

"Therefore, virtue depends upon ourselves; and vice likewise. For where it lies with us to do, it lies with us not to do. Where we can say no, we can say yes. If then the doing a deed, which is noble, lies with us, the not doing it, which is disgraceful, lies with us; and if the not doing, which is noble, lies with us, the doing, which is disgraceful,

also lies with us. But if the doing and likewise the not doing of noble or base deeds lies with us, and if this is, as we found identical with being good or bad, then it follows that it lies with us to be worthy or worthless men."

While Augustine received little, if any, help from Aristotle on the problem of evil, yet Nourrisson believes that Augustine did borrow from Aristotle in a number of important conceptions otherwise.. He writes:

"Ainsi, c'est à Aristote qu'Augustin paraît avoir emprunte, sinon intégralement, du moins en partie:

- 1° Ses conceptions sur les differences des choses;
- 2° Sa théorie célèbre de la forme et de la matière;
- 3° Le complément des vues que déjà lui avait suggérées Platon sur l'éternité et le temps;
- 4° Sa définition de l'âme, quoiqu'il combatte Aristote en tant qu'il suppose, et à tort, qu'Aristote a défini l'âme une quintessence;
- 5° Sa théorie des évolutions de l'âme; vie seminale, vie sensible, vie intellectuelle;
- 6° Sa théorie de la connaissance, du sens interne ou sixième sens, des sensibles propres et des sensibles communs, de la mémoire, de l'imagination, de la reminiscence;
- 7° L'idée d'une sagesse, lumière supérieure de l'âme, et faculté nécessaire qui se développe en elle;
- 8° Quelques-unes de ses maximes les plus élevées sur la morale; par exemple, ce précepte qu'il faut vivre conformément à la partie dominante de notre être, c'est à dire à la raison; la théorie du milieu ou de la juste mesure; la distinction des biens en grands, moyens et petits, et aussi, par malheur, l'inspiration générale de sa théorie de l'esclavage;
- 9° Sa doctrine de la sociabilité de l'homme, et nombre de ses énonciations les plus sûres touchant la constitution des sociétés."<sup>11</sup>

The Stoics took a rather fatalistic view of life. Epicurus (341-270B.C.), according to Diogenes Laertius, regarded all good and all evil as in sensation, and death as the most formidable of all evils.<sup>12</sup> Epictetus (90 A.D.), however, said that it was not death itself but the fear of death that was the chief source of all evils to man.<sup>13</sup> He also looked upon evil as necessary to the good. He says:

"True instruction is this: -- to learn to wish that each thing should come to pass as it does. And how does it come to pass? As the Disposer has disposed it. Now he has disposed that there should be summer and winter, and plenty and dearth, and vice and virtue, and all such opposites, for the harmony of the whole."<sup>14</sup>

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Epictetus believed that it was within our own will-power and point of view to turn so-called evils into the goods of life. He says:

"If, then the things independent of our will are neither good nor evil, and all things that do depend on will are in our own power, and can neither be taken away from us nor given to us unless we please, what room is there left for anxiety?"<sup>15</sup>

"Bring whatever you please, and I will turn it into good. Bring sickness, death, want, reproach, trial for life. All these, by the rod of Hermes, shall turn to advantage. .... If then I think as I ought of poverty, of sickness, of political disorder, is not that enough for me? Why then must I any longer seek good or evil in externals?"<sup>16</sup>

Marcus Aurelius (120-180 A.D.), one of the best known of the Stoics, taught that evil could be overcome by the right mental attitude also. He says:

"Whatsoever is expedient unto thee, O World, is expedient unto me, nothing can be unseasonable unto me, or out of date, which unto thee is reasonable. Whatsoever thy reasons bear, shall ever by me be esteemed as happy fruit and increase."<sup>17</sup>

"Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful and of the bad that it is ugly.....I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him."<sup>18</sup>

Seneca (3-65 A.D.) also places evil largely in one's personal mental attitude.

In De Vita Beata, he writes:

"You understand, even if I do not say more, that once, when we have driven away all that excites or affrights us, there ensues unbroken tranquility and enduring freedom; for when pleasures and fears have been banished, then in place of all that is trivial and fragile and harmful just because of the evil it works, there comes upon us a boundless peace that is firm and unalterable." (De Vita Beata, III.4)

"It may be defined in the statement that the happy man is he who recognizes no good and evil other than a good and evil mind." (De Vita Beata, IV.1)

It is evident that Augustine would find no help from the Stoics in handling the problem of evil. Practically the same could be said for the Epicureans, who were naturalistic and hedonistic. The Pleasant and the pain-

ful were substituted for good and evil by them. They could not see purpose in the universe. One of their writers, Lucretius, in his work On the Nature of Things, says:

"The nature of the world is by no means made by divine grace for us; so great are the flaws by which it stands beset." (II:180 f.)

When we come to the Neoplatonists, we find influences bearing directly upon Augustine's thought. He admits that he was influenced by them. In Contra Academicos, he says:

"The utterance of Plato, the most pure and bright in all philosophy, scattering the clouds of error, has shone forth most of all in Plotinus, the Platonic philosopher who has been deemed so like his master that one might think them contemporaries, if the length of time between them did not compel us to say that in Plotinus Plato lived again." (3:18)

He was especially acquainted with the Neoplatonists Plotinus, Porphyry and Jamblicus through the translations from Greek to Latin of the rhetorician Victorinus. Plotinus had the most influence on Augustine. Régis Jolivet of France, in his work entitled Saint Augustin et Le Neoplatonisme, rightly says on this point:

"Quoi qu'il en soit, le choc qu'Augustin ressentit de son contact avec le neo-platonisme fut si puissant que non seulement son esprit en fut encore que dans la suite, et tout le long de sa carrière, les théories plotiniennes restèrent l'un des pivots de sa propre doctrine."<sup>19</sup>

"Il lui attribue dans hésiter l'oeuvre de sa délivrance. Et, en effet, sur deux des points qui le troubleaient encore après son retour à la foi de son enfance -- problème de sa nature de Dieu et problème du mal, -- le neo-platonisme lui apportait la lumière libératrice..."<sup>20</sup>

Plotinus (204-269 A.D.) was one of the greatest thinkers of his time. His aim was to systematize the main doctrines of Greek philosophy under a religious principle. He professed to carry out the system of Plato to its logical conclusion and to find in the One -- the Supreme Being -- that unity of thought and life after which all reflection is striving. The three main ideas of Plotinus are The One, The Nous, and The World-Soul. The One, the

First, the Good, is God, rather than Being or Mind. God is above all thought, definition, description or affirmation. The Nous is the first emanation from the One, and is intelligent, turning towards the One to grasp it, and in this turning becomes Reason, which implies by its very nature a dual element, a knowing subject and a known object. The World-Soul is the image of the Nous. The World-Soul gives rise to individual souls, or plastic forces, which in turn give rise to matter, with which they combine to constitute material phenomena. Matter is multiplicity, change, not-being, privation, the course of all evil.

Porphyrus (233-304 A.D.) arranged Plotinus' works into six Enneads. The first Ennead, Book Eight, deals rather fully with the problem of evil. From this part of Plotinus' works I am able to present the following:<sup>21</sup>

"...evil, which consists in the absence of all goods, could not be described as a form." (I.8.1)

Evil located  
in non-being.

"Evil then must be located in non-being, and must, so to speak, be its form, referring to the things that mingle with it, or have some community with it. This 'non-being,' however, is not absolute non-being. Its difference from being resembles the difference between being and movement or rest. .... To gain some conception of evil it may be represented by the contrast between measure and incommensurability; between indetermination and its goal; between lack of form and the creating principle of form; between lack and self-sufficiency; as the perpetual unlimited and changeableness; as passivity, insatiableness, and absolute poverty.

Essence of  
evil.

Those are not the mere accidents of evil, but its very essence; all of that can be discovered when any part of evil is examined. The other objects, when they participate in the evil and resemble it, become evil without however being absolute Evil. .... For if evil be an accident in something, then evil, though not being a real being, must be something by itself. .... One may distinguish Evil in itself and evil as accident. .... As to evil things, they are such because evil is mingled with them, either because they contemplate evil, or because they fulfill it. Reason, therefore, forces us to recognize as the primary evil, Evil in itself. (This is matter which is) the subject of figure, form, determination, and limitation; which owes its ornaments to others, which has nothing good in itself, which is but a vain image

Evil is  
something.

Evil in  
itself.

by comparison with the real beings -- in other words, the essence of evil, if such an essence can exist." (I.8.3)

"So far as the nature of bodies participates in matter, it is an evil; yet it could not be the primary Evil, for it has a certain form. Nevertheless this form possesses no reality. ...." (I.8.4)

In this paragraph also he shows that the soul is not evil by herself, but may degenerate by looking at darkness.

Evil is  
lack.

"Evil consists not in the lack of any particular thing, but of everything in general. Nothing is evil merely because it lacks a little of being good; its nature might still be perfect. But what, like matter, lacks good entirely, is essentially evil, and possesses nothing good? ..... A mere lack (of good) therefore, may be characterized as not being good; but complete lack is evil; while a lack of medium intensity consists in the possibility of falling into evil, and is already an evil. Evil, therefore, is not any particular evil, as injustice, or any special vice; evil is that which is not yet anything of that, being nothing definite. Injustice and the other vices must be considered as kinds of evil, distinguished from each other by mere accidents; as for instance, what occurs by malice. Besides, the different kinds of evil differ from each other either by the matter in which evil resides, or by the parts of the soul to which it refers, as sight, desire, and passion. ....

Man as being  
is not evil.

"From such definitions it would follow that we are not the principle of evil, and are not evil in ourselves, for these evils existed before us. Only in spite of themselves would men yield to vice. The evils of the soul are avoidable, but

Evil due to  
matter.

not all men possess the necessary firmness. Evil, therefore, is caused by the presence of matter in sense-objects, and is

Evil and wicked-  
ness not  
identical.

not identical with the wickedness of men. For wickedness does not exist in all men; some triumph over wickedness, while they who do not even need to triumph over it, are still better. In all cases men triumph over evil by those of their faculties that are not engaged in matter." (I.8.5)

In paragraph I.8.7 of the Enneads, Plotinus says evil is necessary because matter is necessary to the existence of the world. He teaches a descending order of being from the First Good until being is exhausted. Each order of being has less good than the order next above it. There must be a last and lowest order of being in which good entirely ceases to be, and that order is matter, and matter and evil are identical; therefore, the existence

of evil is necessary.

In I.8.8, Plotinus insists that matter is the cause of evil, even in the case of such wickedness as ignorance and perverted appetites. Some would insist that evil is form that informs matter rather than the matter itself. Plotinus argues that form is warped by matter and is not what it would be if it existed outside of matter. "Matter dominates any principle that appears within it, alters it, and corrupts it by imparting thereto its own nature, which is contrary to the Good," he says. Thus matter is the cause of evils, and matter is necessary to this plane of existence. He divides evil into primary and secondary, as follows:

"In short, the primary Evil is that which by itself lacks measure. The secondary evil is that which accidentally becomes formless, either by assimilation or participation. In the front rank is the darkness; in the second that which has become obscured. Thus vice, being in the soul the result of ignorance and formlessness, is of secondary rank. It is not absolute Evil, because, on its side, virtue is not absolute Good; it is good only by its assimilation and participation with the Good." (I.8.8)

In I.8.9 he shows that we know evil, or vice, by measuring it with virtue and understanding what is lacking. Matter is both without qualities and evil. He writes:

"It is, therefore, possible to assert of matter that it both has no quality, and yet is evil. Matter is not evil because it has a quality, but just because it has none. If, indeed, matter possessed a form, it might indeed be bad; but it would not be a nature contrary to all form." (I.8.10)

He holds that the soul cannot by itself be evil, but that evil occurs when matter intrudes itself into the presence of the soul, and matter is exposed to the illuminating rays of the intelligence of the soul, but matter obscures and weakens the light that shines down upon it by mingling its darkness with the soul's light; thus the soul is enticed to descend into matter. His conclusion is:



"Until the soul can manage to accomplish her return into the intelligible world, matter degrades what it has succeeded in abstracting from the soul. For the soul, therefore, matter is a cause of weakness and vice. Therefore, by herself, the soul is primitively evil, and is the first evil. By its presence, matter is the cause of the soul's exerting her generative powers, and being thus led to suffering; it is matter that causes the soul to enter into dealings with matter, and thus to become evil. The soul, indeed, would never have approached matter unless the latter's presence had not afforded the soul an opportunity to produce generation." (I.3.14)

"For what is evil to soul? It is being in contact with inferior nature; otherwise the soul would not have any appetite, pain, or fear. Indeed fear is felt by us only for the composite (of soul and body), fearing is dissolution, which thus is the cause of our pains and sufferings ..... (Matter, which is synonymous with evil) is like a captive which beauty covers with golden chains, so that the divinities might not see its nakedness, and that men might not be intruded on by it; or that men, if they must see it, shall be reminded of beauty on observing an even weakened image thereof." (I.3.15)

This rather lengthy treatment of Plotinus' discussion of evil is justified because he took up the problem more thoroughly than most anyone else before Augustine, and because his opinions were quite influential with Augustine. We have seen that Plotinus taught that matter is the first evil. Matter is the absence of order and has powers of resistance to form. Augustine would not agree that matter is evil in itself, but he would consider that in the measure that it has being, it is good. Augustine would agree that evil is defect or lack of the good. He would also agree that evil cannot exist alone, but must exist in some good. He would agree that we know evil by measuring it with the good, and that evil itself is overruled for good when we consider things as a whole. Augustine would agree with Plotinus that we are not evil in ourselves, that is, in the fact that we exist; that evil was before; but Augustine would disagree with him when he says that we cannot be the source of evil. Augustine places the source of evil in the free will of man, not in matter, or in the contact of the soul with matter.

R. Jolivet is right when he says the following as to Plotinus' aid to

## Augustine on the problem of evil:

"Grace à cette découverte du monde intelligible, le problème du mal devenait susceptible de solution. On se rappelle, en effet, qu'Augustin était arrêté par la conception du mal comme substance ou chose corporelle. Ne pouvant en attribuer à Dieu la création, force lui était de le considérer comme un principe premier indépendant de la divinité. Or, maintenant, il se rendait compte que le mal, s'il était une substance, ne serait plus le mal, puisque tout ce qui existe, procédant de la Pensée divine est bon. L'être et le bien coïncident, et par suit, même les choses que se corrompent sont bonnes: elles ne sont pas le bien absolu, puisqu'elles se corrompent, mais elles ne sont pas non plus le mal, sinon il n'y aurait rien en elles qui donnât prise à la corruption, le mal étant par essence la corruption même. Le mal n'est donc pas de l'être, mais proprement du non-être.

"Restait à expliquer l'existence de ce non-être. Là encore Plotin mettait Augustin sur la voie, en lui apprenant que le mal n'est rien d'autre qu'un corollaire de l'essentielle et nécessaire diversité des êtres créés et de l'essentielle et nécessaire limitation de l'être contingent. Les choses ne peuvent être ordonnées qu'au bien total de l'univers." 22

With Neoplatonic help. Augustine passed over to Christian thinking, and the Scriptures became his authority and guide. St. Paul, in particular, was his greatest helper among Scripture writers. Augustine's theory of the unity and the fall of the human race in Adam is largely an exposition of St. Paul's teachings on this subject. In the Confessions, we find the following statements of Augustine himself as to this transition:

"But having then read those books of the Platonists, and thence been taught to search for incorporeal truth, I saw Thy invisible things, understood by those things which are made; and though cast back, I perceived what that was, which through the darkness of my mind, I was hindered from contemplating, being assured, 'That Thou wert, and were infinite, and yet not diffused in space, finite or infinite; and that Thou truly art who art the same ever, in no part nor motion, varying; and that all other things are from Thee, on this most sure ground alone, that they are.' Of these things I was assured, yet too unsure to enjoy Thee. .... For where was that charity building upon the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus? or when should these books teach me it? Upon these, I believe Thou therefore willedst that I should fall, before I studied Thy Scriptures, that it might be imprinted on my memory, how I was affected by them; and that afterwards when my spirits were tamed through Thy books, and my wounds touched by Thy healing fingers, I might discern and distinguish between presumption and confession; between those who saw whither they were to go, yet saw not the way, and the way that leadeth not to behold only but to dwell in the beatific country." (VII.II.26)

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"Most eagerly then did I seize that venerable writing of Thy Spirit; and chiefly the Apostle Paul. Whereupon those difficulties vanished away, wherein he once seemed to me to contradict himself, and the text of his discourse not to agree with the testimonies of the Law and the Prophets. And the face of that pure word appeared to me one and the same; and I learned to rejoice with trembling. So I began; and whatsoever truth I had read in those other books, I found here amid the praise of Thy Grace.." (VII.XXI. 27).

It would be impossible to trace down every influence upon Augustine's thinking on the problem, for he drew upon all available sources. We have seen, however, in this chapter, that the main sources of positive help to him were Platonic, Neo-platonic and Christian. I have not discussed in this chapter the Manichaeian influence on Augustine, since that has been done in Chapter III and was shown to be negative and unsatisfactory.

## CHAPTER V.

### ST. AUGUSTINE'S OWN TREATMENT OF EVIL.

Augustine faced the problem of evil as squarely and searchingly as anyone could possibly do. It was a serious problem to him. His handling of this difficulty deserves our best attention.

1. NATURE OF EVIL. To him, evil is something entirely negative in its nature. It cannot exist apart from good. Nature, or being, is always good and is necessary to the existence of evil. In the Enchiridion he writes:

"Accordingly, there is nothing of what we call evil if there be nothing good. But a good which is wholly without evil is a perfect good. A good, on the other hand, which contains evil is a faulty or imperfect good; and there can be no evil where there is no good. From all this we arrive at the curious result: that since every being is good, and that no evil can exist except in a being. Nothing, then, can be evil except something which is good. And, although this, when stated, seems to be a contradiction, yet the strictness of reasoning leaves us no escape from the conclusion.....if a man is a good thing because he is a being, what is an evil man but an evil good? Yet, when we accurately distinguish these two things, we find that it is not because he is a man that he is an evil, or because he is wicked that he is a good; but that he is a good because he is a man, and evil because he is wicked....every being, even if it be a defective one, in so far as it is a being is good, and in so far as it is defective is evil."

Evil, therefore, is lack of being, essence, or nature. Good can and does exist without evil, but no evil can exist without some good to which it attaches. He writes:

"But although no one can doubt that good and evil are contraries, not only can they exist at the same time, but evil cannot exist without good, or in anything that is not good. Good, however, can exist without evil. For a man or an angel can exist without being wicked; but nothing can be wicked except a man or an angel: and so far as he is a man or an angel, he is good; so far as he is wicked, he is an evil. And these two contraries are so far co-existent, what is good did not exist in what is evil, neither could evil exist; because corruption could not have either a place to dwell in, or a source to spring from if there were nothing that could be corrupted; and nothing can be corrupted except what is good, for corruption is nothing else but the destruction of good. From what is good, then, evils arose, and except in what is good they do not

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exist; nor was there any other source from which any evil nature could arise. For if there were, then, in so far as this was a being, it was certainly a good; and a being which was incorruptible would be a great good; and even one which was corruptible must be to some extent a good, for only by corrupting what was good in it could corruption do it harm."<sup>2</sup>

God is the only nature that exists in which there is no possibility of evil. He is unchangeably good. But all natures below him were created subject to change, and any diminishing of the good of any nature is evil.

"All things that exist, therefore, seeing that the Creator of them all is supremely good, are themselves good. But because they are not, like their Creator, supremely and unchangeably good, their good may be diminished and increased. But for good to be diminished is an evil, although, however much it may be diminished, it is necessary if the being is to continue, that some good should remain to constitute the being."

But there cannot be diminution of the being to the extent that all the good is gone; then the being would cease to exist, and evil would also cease to exist with it, for evil cannot exist alone.

"But for good to be diminished is an evil, although, however much it may be diminished, it is necessary if the being is to continue, that some good should remain to constitute the being. For however small or of whatever kind the being may be, the good which makes it a being cannot be destroyed without destroying the being itself. An uncorrupted nature is justly held in esteem. But if, still further, it be incorruptible it is undoubtedly considered of still higher value. When it is corrupted, however, its corruption is an evil, because it is deprived of some sort of good. For if it be deprived of no good, it receives no injury; but it does receive injury, therefore it is deprived of good. Therefore, so long as a being is in process of corruption, there is in it some good of which it is being deprived; and if a part of the being should remain which cannot be corrupted this will certainly be an incorruptible being, and accordingly the process of corruption will result in the manifestation of this great good. But if it do not cease to be corrupted, neither can it cease to possess good of which corruption may deprive it. But if it should be thoroughly and completely consumed by corruption, there will then be no good left, because there will be no being. Wherefore, corruption can consume the good only by consuming the being. Every being therefore, is a good; a great good, if it cannot be corrupted; a little good, if it can; but in any case, only the foolish or ignorant will deny that it is a good. And if it be wholly consumed by corruption then the corruption itself must cease to exist, as there is no being left in which it can dwell."<sup>4</sup>

These same thoughts are expressed in a number of places in Augustine's

writings. Another good reference is in The City of God, Boox XII, chap. 3, as follows:

God is the  
supreme and  
unchangeable  
good.

No evil can  
hurt God.

Good can exist  
alone, but not  
evil.

"For God is unchangeable and wholly proof against injury. Therefore the vice which makes those who are called His enemies resist Him, is an evil not to God, but to themselves. And to them it is an evil, solely because it corrupts the good of their nature. It is not nature, therefore, but vice, which is contrary to God. For that which is evil is contrary to the good. And who will deny that God is the supreme good? Vice, therefore, is contrary to God, as evil to good. Further, the nature it vitiates is a good, and therefore to this good also it is contrary. But while it is contrary to God only as evil to good, it is contrary to the nature it vitiates, both as evil and as hurtful. For to God no evils are hurtful; but only to natures mutable and corruptible, though, by the testimony of the vices themselves, originally good. For were they not good, vices could not hurt them. For how do they hurt them but by depriving them of integrity, beauty, welfare, virtue, and in short, whatever natural good vice is wont to diminish or destroy? But if there is no good to take away then no injury can be done, and consequently there can be no vice. For it is impossible that there should be a harmless vice. Whence, we gather, that though vice cannot injure the unchangeable good, it can injure nothing but good; because it does not exist where it does not injure. This, then, may be thus formulated: Vice cannot be in the highest good, and cannot be but in some good. Things solely good, therefore, can in some circumstances exist; things solely evil, never; for even those natures which are vitiated by an evil will, so far indeed as they are vitiated, are evil, but in so far as they are natures they are good. And when a vitiated nature is punished, besides the good it has in being a nature, it has this also, that it is not unpunished."

He shows how this view works out in practical effect in the case of disease and wounds in the bodies of animals:

"In the bodies of animals, disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health; for when a cure is effected, that does not mean that the evils which were present -- namely, the diseases and wounds -- go away from the body and dwell elsewhere: they altogether cease to exist; for the wound or disease is not a substance, but a defect in the fleshly substance, the flesh itself being a substance, and therefore something good, of which those evils -- that is, privations of the good which we call health -- are accidents. Just in the same way, what are called vices in the soul are nothing but privations of natural good. And when they are cured, they are transferred elsewhere: when they cease to exist in the healthy soul, they cannot exist anywhere else."

Natures are the creation of God and for them to exist in the rank and order assigned to them by God is good.

"All natures, then, inasmuch as they are, and have therefore a rank and species of their own, and a kind of internal harmony, are certainly good. And when they are in the places assigned to them by the order of their nature, they preserve such being as they have received. And those things which have not received everlasting being, are altered for better or for worse, so as to suit the wants and motions of those things to which the Creator's law has made them subservient."

We can say that Augustine's view of God was at the basis of his views of good and evil. Dr. LeBlanc has said on this subject:

"God is by definition the supreme good. Being the supreme good means that there is no good above nor outside of Him. He cannot change for He can neither gain nor lose anything. Creatures exist by Him, but they are not of Him. If they were of Him they would be identical with Him - therefore no longer creatures. Their origin is something else. Created, they were taken out of nothing. Now what comes of nothingness not only participates of being but also of non-being. Therefore there is in the creature an original lack or want engendering the need to acquire - therefore engendering a need of change. This is the metaphysical origin of their mutability."

McGiffert summarizes it very well when he says:

"At the very center of his thought was his doctrine of God....Augustine's conception of God was at bottom Neoplatonic. Existence in itself is a good. He was so sure of this that he maintained it is better to exist even in misery than not to exist. And he insisted that the race as a whole agree with him and even animals and plants, all of which shun death by every means in their power. He thus recognized the will to live as a fundamental and universal instinct. All being is good, 'a great good if it cannot be corrupted, a small good if it can.' (Enchiridion, 12) Non-being is evil; evil is merely negative, the loss of good, (privatio boni). 'If things are deprived of all good they cease to exist. So long as they are, they are good. Whatever is is good. The evil then whose source I sought is not a substance, for were it a substance it would be good.' God is the only real being, for he is the absolutely unchangeable and hence at the farthest remove from non-existence. God is himself reality, and the only reality. All else is temporary and changing, and hence not truly real."

"As God is the only real being, he is the only real good. Apart from him there is no reality and hence apart from him there is no good. Man's highest good is to depend upon God and cleave to him. It is the language of philosophy as well as of piety when Augustine says: 'God, to turn away from whom is to fall; to turn back to him is to rise again; to abide in whom is to stand fast. God, to depart from whom is to die;

to return to whom is to come to life again; to dwell in whom is to live.' (City of God, XI.6) There is no such thing as independent goodness. The desire for independence indeed is the root of all evil."<sup>10</sup>

Augustine combats his former Manichaeism as follows:

"But we do not greatly wonder that persons, who suppose that some evil nature has been generated and propagated by a kind of opposing principle proper to it, refuse to admit that the cause of the creation was this, that the good God produced a good creation. For they believe that He was driven to this enterprise of creation by the urgent necessity of repulsing the evil that warred against Him, and that He mixed His good nature with the evil for the sake of restraining and conquering it; and that this nature of His, being thus shamefully polluted, and most cruelly oppressed and held captive. He labors to cleanse and deliver it, and with all His pains does not wholly succeed; but such part of it as could not be cleansed from that defilement is to serve as a prison and chain of the conquered and incarcerated enemy. The Manichaeans would not drivel, or rather, rave in such a style as this, if they believed the nature of God to be, as it is, unchangeable and absolutely incorruptible, and subject to no injury; and if, moreover, they held in Christian sobriety, that the soul which has shown itself capable of being altered for the worse by its own will, and of being corrupted by sin, and so, of being deprived of the light of eternal truth, -- that this soul, I say, is not a part of God, nor of the same nature as God, but is created by Him, and is far different from its Creator."<sup>11</sup>

2. THE CAUSE OF EVIL. We have seen that Augustine looked upon evil as negative. It is lack or deficiency in the good. It has no essence of its own. This is the nature of evil. The next question which naturally arises, is, what is the cause or origin of evil?

We will find that Augustine did not leave this question unstudied. He says in his Confessions, as already shown, that as a Manichaean he wrestled with the problem of evil, particularly the source of evil. He worked out a solution involving several factors. Evil has its origin in the nothingness out of which God created everything. Thus evil is the lapsing back into nothingness. Dr. LeBlanc says:

"Thus as all nature consists in three perfections (measure, form, and order) all nature is good by definition. If such is the good -- evil can be only the corruption of one or other of those perfections in the nature possessing them. A bad nature is the one in which measure, form, order are corrupted. Not corrupted, that nature would be all measure, form,



order, i.e., good. Even corrupted it remains good as nature and is bad only as corrupted." <sup>12</sup>

Moral evil on the part of angels and man involves free will. Angels and man by their own free will choose something less than God, and thus evil entered. Evil began in the universe not with man but in the angelic order. Satan was not created evil but good. However, he had a free will, and used that free will to choose himself instead of God, thus he became evil. Evil thus owes its origin to the permissive will of God. God did not create it, but he permitted it. God does create punishment for wrongdoing, which is called an evil.

"Evodius. Tell me, I ask, whether God is the author of evil?

Augustine. If you make it clear about what evil you are inquiring I will tell you. For we speak of evil with a two-fold meaning -- one when we say that someone had done badly, the other when one suffers some evil. E. I want to know about both (kinds of evil).

A. But, if you know, or if you believe that God is good (and it is not right to believe otherwise) then God does no evil. Again, if we acknowledge that God is just (for to deny that is wrong too), then (by consequence) He rewards the good, as He punishes the wicked. These punishments surely are bad for those who suffer them. Wherefore, if no one endures penalties unjustly, which we must believe, because we believe that this universe is ruled by divine providence, it follows that God is in no way the author of that former kind of evil. Of this second kind he is the author.

E. Is there then another the author of this evil, of which God is found not to be the author?

A. There is assuredly. For without an author evil could not exist. But if you ask who that one is; it cannot be stated. Because it is not some one individual. For anyone who is bad is the author of his own evil doing. If you are not sure on this point, then mark what was said above -- that evil deeds are punished by God's justice. Indeed they would not be punished justly unless there were the will to do them." <sup>13</sup>

He created the possibility of evil but not the necessity of evil. God could have prevented evil in the universe, but he permitted evil because he knew it was better to allow evil than to exclude it absolutely. We will consider these points in further detail.

a. Evil is due to creation from nothing.

God is the one unchanging and immutable good, but all other natures are subject to change because they are made out of nothing.

"Accordingly we say that there is no unchangeable good but the one, true, blessed God; that the things which He made are indeed good because from Him, yet mutable because made not out of Him, but out of nothing. Although, therefore, they are not the supreme good, for God is a greater good, yet those mutable things, which can adhere to the immutable good, and so be blessed, are the very good; for so completely is He their good, that without Him they cannot but be wretched. And the other created things, in the universe are not better on this account, that they cannot be miserable."<sup>14</sup>

Evil, then, is due to this capacity for change, involving the possibility of this nature falling away and tending to nonexistence.

"This I do know, that the nature of God can never, nowhere, nowise, be defective, and that natures made of nothing can. These latter, however, the more being they have, and the more good they do (for then they do something positive), the more they have efficient causes; but in so far as they are defective in being, and consequently do evil (for then what is their work but vanity?) they have deficient causes. And I know likewise that the will could not become evil, were it unwilling to become so; and therefore its failings are justly punished, being not necessary, but voluntary. For its defections are not to evil things, but are themselves evil; that is to say, are not towards things that are naturally and in themselves evil, but the defection of the will is evil, because it is contrary to the order of nature, and an abandonment of that which has supreme being for that which has less. .... Consequently he who inordinately loves the good which any nature possesses, even though he obtain it, himself becomes evil in the good, and wretched because deprived of a greater good."<sup>15</sup>

b. Evil is not due to an efficient cause but a deficient cause, or a falling away from good.

"And I think there cannot now be any doubt, that the only cause of any good that we enjoy is the goodness of God, and the only cause of evil is the falling away from the unchangeable good of a being made good but changeable, first in the case of an angel, and afterwards in the case of man."<sup>16</sup>

In the case of moral evil, which roots in an evil will, the cause is not efficient but deficient.

"Let no one, therefore, look for an efficient cause of the evil will; for it is not efficient, but deficient, as the will itself is not an effecting of something, but a defect. For defection from that which

supremely is, to that which has less of being, -- this is to begin to have an evil will. Now, to seek to discover the causes of these defections, -- causes, as I have said, not efficient, but deficient, -- is as if some one sought to see darkness, or hear silence. Yet both of these are known by us, and the former by means only of the eye, the latter only by the ear; but not by their positive actuality, but by their want of it. Let no one, then seek to know from me what I know that I do not know; unless he perhaps wishes to learn to be ignorant of that of which all we know is, that it cannot be known. For those things which are known not by their actuality, but by their want of it, are known, if our expression may be allowed and understood, by not knowing them, that by knowing them they may be not known. For when the eyesight surveys objects that strike the sense, it nowhere sees darkness but where it begins not to see. And so no other sense but the ear can perceive silence, and yet it is only perceived by not hearing. Thus, too, our mind perceives intelligible forms by understanding them; but when they are deficient, it knows them by not knowing them, for who can understand defects?"<sup>17</sup>

The only will in the universe that cannot be defective is that of God himself, and the defection in other wills is not necessarily toward things in themselves evil but toward that which is below that which God intended should be their end. (City of God, XII.8, quoted on preceding page) Good will is due to an efficient cause, God himself, but the evil will is due only to itself and perhaps to less of divine assistance than good wills received.

"There is, then, no natural efficient cause, or if I may be allowed the expression, no essential cause, of the evil will, since itself is the origin of evil in mutable spirits, by which the good of their nature is diminished and corrupted; and the will is made evil by nothing else than defection from God, -- a defection of which the cause, too, is certainly deficient. But as to the good will, if we should say that there is no efficient cause of it, we must beware of giving currency to the opinion that the good will of the good angels is not created, but is co-eternal with God. .... And thus we are driven to believe that the holy angels never existed without a good will or the love of God. But the angels who, though created good, are yet evil now, became so by their own will. And this will was not made evil by their good nature, unless by its voluntary defection from good; for good is not the cause of evil, but a defection from good is. These angels, therefore, either received less of the grace of the divine love than those who persevered in the same; or if both were created equally good, then while the one fell by their evil will, the others were more abundantly assisted, and attained to that pitch of blessedness at which they became certain they should never fall from it."<sup>18</sup>

God is the creator of all natures and the bestower of all powers, but not of

all wills, for wicked wills are not from him.

"For, as He is the creator of all natures, so also is He the bestower of all powers, not of all wills; for wicked wills are not from Him.... Material causes, therefore, which may rather be said to be made than to make, are not to be reckoned among efficient causes, because they can only do what the wills of spirits do by them."<sup>19</sup>

McGiffert summarizes Augustine's teaching on this point as follows:

"Instead of thinking of God as the all-inclusive reality of which all that exists is only a part or a manifestation, Augustine thought of him as creator of the universe, an Almighty Being who made the world of men and things not out of his own substance, or out of any other substance, but out of nothing. The world is not an emanation from God, or a necessary efflux from his infinite essence; it is due to God's voluntary act, an act of will. Being made out of nothing it tends to lapse again into nothingness unless constantly sustained by God. It is thus continually dependent on him, not only for its creation but also for its preservation. If God's thought of it and care for it were interrupted for a moment it would immediately cease to exist. It has no stability in itself, only such stability as God gives it, and this depends upon the unbroken exercise of divine power. God did not create the world and then leave it to itself, giving it the ability to go on alone; in a true sense he is creating it every instant, imparting to it afresh the reality which it can get only from him."<sup>20</sup>

"The belief that God created the world out of nothing raised the problem of evil, always a cardinal problem with Augustine, in another and more pressing form. Why should there be evil in a universe created out of nothing by a Being who is both good and all-powerful? Consistently with his Neoplatonic conception of evil as mere negation, as the loss or diminution of being, Augustine explained the evil in the world by the tendency of all created things to lapse again into the nothingness from which they came. (City of God, XIV, 11). This tendency God alone can withstand. As he called the world into being so he alone can maintain it in being, that is he alone can keep evil out of the universe. The cause of evil is nothing positive. Evil is due rather to the absence of divine power which alone can sustain anything in existence, or in other words can alone create and conserve the good."<sup>21</sup>

c. Evil is due to free will whether in angels or men, God created the will free to incline toward good or evil as it might choose, and God does not take away this free exercise of the will.

"Let us then, first of all, lay down this proposition and see whether it satisfies the question before us: that free will, naturally assigned by the Creator to our rational soul, is such a neutral power, as can either incline towards faith, or turn towards unbelief. Consequently a man cannot be said to have even that will with which he believes in God

without having received it; since this rises at the call of God out of the free will which he received naturally when he was created. God no doubt wishes all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the truth; but yet not so as to take away from them free will, for the good or the evil use of which they may be most righteously judged. This being the case, unbelievers indeed do contrary to the will of God when they do not believe His gospel; nevertheless they do not therefore overcome His will, but rob their own selves of the great, nay, the very greatest good, and implicate themselves in penalties of punishments destined to experience the power of Him in punishments whose mercy in His gifts they despised. Thus God's will is for ever invincible; but it would be vanquished, unless it devised what to do with such as despised it, or if these despisers could in any way escape from the retribution which He has appointed for such as they."<sup>22</sup>

The origin of evil, or sin, in the human race was with our first parents in the Garden of Eden, who chose evil instead of good. This choice was not due to necessity, but to the sin of pride, which corrupted them. Man did not become nothing by sinning but his being became more contracted. The secret and sinful turning away from God to self was already there before the open transgression occurred.

"Our first parents fell into open disobedience because already they were secretly corrupted; for the evil act had never been done had not an evil will preceded it. And what is the origin of our evil will but pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin.' And what is pride but the craving for undue exaltation. And this is undue exaltation, when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself. This happens when it becomes its own satisfaction. And it does so when it falls away from that unchangeable good, which ought to satisfy it more than itself.... But man did not so fall away as to become nothing, but being turned towards himself, his being became more contracted than it was when he clave to Him who supremely is. Accordingly, to exist in himself, that is, to be his own satisfaction after abandoning God, is not quite to become a non-entity, but to approximate to that.....

"The devil, then would not have ensnared man in the open and manifest sin of doing what God had forbidden, had man not already begun to live for himself....."<sup>23</sup>

"By craving to be more, man becomes less; and by aspiring to be self-sufficing, he fell away from Him who truly suffices him. Accordingly, this wicked desire which prompts man to please himself as if he were himself light, and which thus turns him away from that light by which, had he followed it, he would himself have become light -- this wicked desire, I say, already secretly existed in him, and the open sin was its consequence."<sup>24</sup>

The specific nature of this sin was the forsaking of God, the supreme being, and turning to themselves.

"And if asked the cause of the misery of the bad, it occurs to us, and not unreasonably, that they are miserable, because they have forsaken Him who supremely is, and have turned to themselves who have no such essence. And this vice, what else is it called than pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin.'"25

McGiffert finds Augustine's position here to be as follows:

"In explaining Adam's own sin Augustine was true to his general theory of evil. Adam's sin, he maintained, was not due to the possession of a fleshly nature. He was created by God and his flesh as well as his spirit was good, not bad. But created out of nothing as he was he tended to lapse again into nothingness, to turn from God to self and choose the lesser instead of the greater good. His fall was due to pride, the greatest of all sins, which means the putting of self before God and the denial of one's absolute dependence on Him."26

The cause of sin in human beings in the fallen state is the inheritance of a corrupted nature. In this corrupted nature man sins from either one or both of two causes, ignorance or weakness, and he must have God's aid to overcome them.

"I shall now say this, which I have often said before in other places of my works. There are two causes that lead to sin: either we do not yet know our duty, or we do not perform the duty that we know. The former is the sin of ignorance, the latter of weakness. Now against these it is our duty to struggle; but we shall certainly be beaten in the fight, unless we are helped by God, not only to see our duty, but also, when we clearly see it, to make the love of righteousness stronger in us than the love of earthly things...."27

"This is the first evil that befell the intelligent creation -- that is, its first privation of good. Following upon this crept in, and now even in opposition to man's will, ignorance of duty, and lust after what is hurtful; and these brought in their train of error and suffering, which, when they are felt to be imminent, produce that shrinking of the mind which is called fear..."28

d. Evil in the human race is also due to the seductions of the devil, or Satan. All evil in men arises either out of the lusts of the fallen nature or from the appeals of Satan to men possessing this fallen nature. These two causes of evil in men are different but related. The fallen nature yields

more easily to the devil, but it would not be impossible for him to lure to sin even though they had no fallen nature. The devil could not create nature but he could corrupt an existing nature.

"Human beings are not under the devil's dominion because they are human beings, in which respect they are the fruits of matrimony; but because they are sinful, in which resides the transmission of their sins. For the devil is the author of sin, not of nature."<sup>29</sup>

"The devil persuaded evil as a sin; he did not create it as a nature. No doubt he persuaded nature for man is nature; and therefore by his persuasion he corrupted it. He who wounds a limb does not, of course, create it, but he injures it.... This wound was at that fatal moment of the fall inflicted by the devil to a vastly wider and deeper extent than are the sins which are known amongst men. Whence it came to pass that our nature having then and there been deteriorated by that great sin of the first man, not only was made a sinner, but also generates sinners; and yet the very weakness, under which the virtue of a holy life has drooped and died, is not really nature, but corruption; precisely as a bad state of health is not a bodily substance or nature, but disorder."<sup>30</sup>

If we ask, what the cause of sin in the devil was, we find that it was the same as the cause of sin in man, namely, pride, or seeking self instead of God.

"Let him seek diligently, and he will find in the law that sin of pride is quite distinguished from all other sins. For many sins are committed through pride; but yet not all things which are wrongly done are done proudly -- at any rate, not by the ignorant, not by the infirm, and not, generally speaking, by the weeping and sorrowful. And indeed pride, although it be in itself a great sin, is of such sort in itself alone apart from others, that, as I have already remarked, it for the most part follows after and steals with more rapid foot, not so much upon sins as upon things which are actually well done. However, that which he has understood in another sense, is after all most truly said, 'Pride is the commencement of all sin;' because it was this which overthrew the devil, from whom arose the origin of sin; and afterwards, when his malice and envy pursued man, who was yet standing in his uprightness, it subverted him in the same way in which he himself fell."<sup>31</sup>

The devil himself was created by God, not evil but good, for there was a time when he did not sin.

"And from this passage, 'The devil sinneth from the beginning,' it is not to be supposed that he sinned from the beginning of his created existence, but from the beginning of his sin, when by his pride he had once commenced to sin."

"His beginning (the devil's), then, is the handiwork of God; for there is no nature, even among the least, and lowest, and last of the beasts, which was not the work of Him from whom has proceeded all measure, all form, all order, without which nothing can be planned or conceived. How much more, then, is this angelic nature, which surpasses in dignity all else that He has made, the handiwork of the Most High!"<sup>32</sup>

The devil was one of the good angels who fell, and again there was no efficient cause for their fall but only a deficient one. This is discussed at some length in City of God, XII.6, as follows:

"Thus the true cause of the blessedness of the good angels is found to be this, that they cleave to Him who supremely is. And if asked the cause of the misery of the bad, it occurs to us, and not unreasonably, that they are miserable because they have forsaken Him who supremely is, and have turned to themselves who have no such essence. And this vice, what else is it called than pride? For 'pride is the beginning of sin.' They were unwilling, then to preserve their strength for God; and as adherence to God was the condition of their enjoying an ampler being, they diminished it by preferring themselves to Him. This was the first defect, and the first impoverishment, and the first flaw of their nature, which was created, not indeed supremely existent, but finding its blessedness in the enjoyment of the Supreme Being, whilst by abandoning Him it should become, not indeed no nature at all, but a nature with a less ample existence, and therefore wretched.

Pride

No efficient cause.

Cause of an evil will.

"If the further question be asked, What was the efficient cause of their evil will? there is none. For what was it which makes the will bad, when it is the will itself which makes the action bad? And consequently the bad will is the cause of the bad action, for nothing is the efficient cause of the bad will. For if anything is the cause, this thing either has or has not a will. If it has, the will is either good or bad. If good, who is so left to himself as to say that a good will makes a will bad? For in this case a good will should be the cause of sin; a most absurd supposition. On the other hand, if this hypothetical thing has a bad will, I wish to know what made it so; and that we may not go on forever, I ask at once, what made the first evil will bad? For that is not the first which was itself corrupted by an evil will, but that is the first which was made evil by no other will. For if it were preceded by that which made it evil, that will was first which made the other evil. But if it is replied, 'Nothing made it evil; it always was evil,' I ask if it has been existing in some nature. For if not, then it did not exist at all; and if it did exist in some nature, then it vitiated and corrupted it, and injured it, and consequently deprived it of good. And therefore the



Evil will not  
eternal.

A good thing  
not the effi-  
cient cause of  
an evil will.

An illustra-  
tion.

evil will could not exist in an evil nature, but in a nature at once good and mutable, which this vice could injure. For if it did no injury, it was no vice; and consequently the will in which it was, could not be called evil. But if it did injury, it did it by taking away or diminishing good. And therefore there could not be from eternity, as was suggested, an evil will in that thing in which there had been previously a natural good, which the evil will was able to diminish by corrupting it. If, then, it was not from eternity, who, I ask, made it? The only thing that can be suggested in reply is that something which itself had no will, made the will evil. I ask, then, whether this thing was superior, inferior, or equal to it? If superior, then it is better. How then, has it no will, and not rather a good will? The same reasoning applies if it was equal; for so long as two things have equally a good will, the one cannot produce in the other an evil will. Then remains the supposition that that which first sinned, was itself an inferior thing without a will. But that thing, be it of the lowest and most earthly kind, is certainly itself good, since it is a nature and being, with a form and rank of its own in its own kind and order. How, then, can a good thing be the efficient cause of an evil will? How, I say, can good be the cause of evil? For when the will abandons what is above itself, and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil -- not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is wicked. Therefore it is not an inferior thing which has made the will evil, but it is itself which has become so by wickedly and inordinately desiring an inferior thing. For if two men, alike in physical and moral constitution, see the same corporeal beauty, and one of them is excited by the sight to desire an illicit enjoyment while the other stedfastly maintains a modest restraint of his will, what do we suppose brings it about, that there is an evil will in the one and not in the other? What produces it in the man in whom it exists? Not the bodily beauty, for that was presented equally to the gaze of both, and yet did not produce in both an evil will. Did the flesh of the one cause the desire as he looked? But why did not the flesh of the other? Or was it the disposition? But why not the disposition of both? For we are supposing that both were of a like temperament of body and soul. Must we then, say that the one was tempted by a secret suggestion of the evil spirit? As if it was not by his own will that he consented to this suggestion and to any inducement whatever! This consent then, this evil will which he presented to the evil suasive influence -- what was the cause of it, we ask? For, not to delay on such a difficulty as this, if both are tempted equally and one yields and consents to the temptation while the other remains unmoved by it, what other account can we give of the matter than this, that the one is willing, the other unwilling, to fall away from

chastity? And what causes this but their own wills, in cases at least such as we are supposing, where the temperament is identical? The same beauty was equally obvious to the eyes of both; the same secret temptation pressed on both with equal violence. However minutely we examine the case, therefore, we can discern nothing which caused the will of the one to be evil. For if we say that the man himself made his will evil, what was the man himself before his will was evil but a good nature created by God, the unchangeable good? Here are two men who, before the temptation, were alike in body and soul, and of whom one yielded to the tempter who persuaded him, while the other could not be persuaded to desire that lovely body which was equally before the eyes of both. Shall we say of the successfully tempted man that he corrupted his own will, since he was certainly good before his will became bad? Then, why did he do so? Was it because his will was a nature, or because it was made of nothing? We shall find that the latter is the case. For if a nature is the cause of an evil will, what else can we say than that evil arises from good or that good is the cause of evil? And how can it come to pass that a nature, good though mutable, should produce an evil -- that is to say, should make the will itself wicked?"<sup>33</sup>

Nature is good  
and cannot  
produce evil  
will.

e. God cannot be charged with being the cause of evil, or the author of evil, but He does permit and regulate evil.

"And yet, I sinned herein, O Lord God, the Creator and Disposer of all things in nature, of sin the Disposer only, O Lord my God, I sinned in transgressing the commands of my parents and those my masters."<sup>34</sup>

God foreknew that man would fall, and was able to keep him from falling, if He had so chosen, but God intended some good in permitting man to fall, even the destruction of the devil himself.

"Since, then God was not ignorant that man would fall, why should He not have suffered him to be tempted by an angel who hated and envied him? It was not, indeed, that He was unaware that he should be conquered, but because He foresaw that by the man's seed, aided by divine grace, this same devil himself should be conquered, to the greater glory of the saints. All was brought about in such manner, that neither did any future event escape God's foreknowledge, nor did His foreknowledge compel any one to sin, and so as to demonstrate in the experience of the intelligent creation, human and angelic, how great a difference there is between the private presumption of the creature and the Creator's protection. For who will dare to believe or say that it was not in God's power to prevent both angels and men from sinning? But God preferred to leave this in their power, and thus to show both what evil could be wrought by their pride, and what good by His grace."<sup>35</sup>

In Augustine's explanation of the cause of evil, we can see that he rejects some of the widely accepted theories of evil which have prevailed before him and since. We quote Burton on this point:

"The thought of mankind, in its endeavor to account for the origin of evil, has always revolved about a few representative theories. One type of mind is satisfied with a dualistic explanation of the universe, and like the Manicheans, is willing to account for the presence of evil in the world by referring it to some evil principle. Others, recognizing the finiteness of all created being, place the origin of evil in metaphysical imperfection. Since the days of Plato, or even earlier, the pre-existence of souls has been a favorite doctrine, and has led to the theory that sin originated in some choice of the individual in that pre-temporal state. Man's fleshly nature, until the days of evolution, was widely regarded as the flagrant source of man's evil and sin. The suggestive contacts of life have induced others to find the origin of evil in its necessary existence as a foil to good. Freedom of the will likewise, while serving as an integral part of the other theories, has been frequently used to explain the source of evil.... We have found that all of these historic explanations of the origin of evil were dealt with by Augustine, and that he rejected all of them, with the exception of metaphysical imperfection and freedom. Even these two are related in a most interesting fashion."<sup>36</sup>

3. THE EFFECTS OF EVIL. The effects of evil already have been touched upon somewhat, but we shall attempt to look into this matter more thoroughly. In the material realm, the effect of evil is simply lack of the good, or a going back toward non-existence.

In the moral realm where evil is the same as sin the effects of evil are more detailed. In the case of Adam in his unfallen state, he would have become immortal and incorruptible if he had not sinned. His natural body would have been changed into a spiritual body without death.

"Still, although it was by reason of his body that he was dust, and although he bare about the natural body in which he was created, he would, if he had not sinned, have been changed into a spiritual body, and would have passed into the incorruptible state, which is promised to the faithful and the saints, without the peril of death.... Therefore, if Adam had not sinned, he would not have been divested of his body, but would have been clothed upon with immortality and incorruption... he might have passed from the natural into the spiritual body."<sup>37</sup>

"Thus also He made man with free will; and although ignorant of his future fall, yet therefore happy, because he thought it was in his own power both not to die and not to become miserable. And if he had willed by his own free will to continue in this state of uprightness and freedom from sin, assuredly without any experience of death and of unhappiness he would have received by the merit of that continuance the fullness of blessing with which the holy angels also are blessed; that is, the impossibility of falling any more, and the knowledge of this with absolute certainty...."<sup>38</sup>

"Man, on the other hand, whose nature was to be a mean between the angelic and bestial, He created in such sort, that if he remained in subjection to His Creator as his rightful Lord, and piously kept His commandments, he should pass into the company of the angels, and obtain without the intervention of death, a blessed and endless immortality."<sup>39</sup>

But because Adam sinned instead of continuing in innocence and sinlessness, he involved the whole human race, which was wrapped up in his loins, in sin and imparted to all humanity a sinful nature.

"And from this we gather that we have derived from Adam, in whom we all have sinned, not all our actual sins, but only original sin; whereas from Christ, in whom we all are justified, we obtain the remission not merely of that original sin, but of the rest of our sins also, which we have added."<sup>40</sup>

"But this sin, which changed man for the worse in paradise, because it is far greater than we can form any judgement of, is contracted by every one at his birth, and is remitted only in the regenerate; and this derangement is such as to be derived even from parents who have been regenerated, and in whom the sin is remitted and covered..."<sup>41</sup>

This original sin with which we are all born manifests itself in all men in several ways.

a. Shame. Before the fall man had no feeling of shame in his naked condition, but after it a sense of shame and guilt came upon him.

"When, indeed, Adam sinned by not obeying God, then his body -- although it was a natural and mortal body -- lost the grace whereby it used in every part of it to be obedient to the soul. Then there arose in men affections common to the brutes which are productive of shame, and which made man ashamed of his own nakedness. Then also, by a certain disease which was conceived in men from a sudden injected and pestilential corruption, it was brought about that they lost that stability of life in which they were created, and, by reason of the mutations which they experienced in the stages of life, issued at last in death."<sup>42</sup>

"Their condition was different before sin, for it is written, 'They were naked and were not ashamed,' -- not that their nakedness was unknown to them, but because nakedness was not yet shameful, because not yet did lust move those members without the will's consent; not yet did the flesh by its disobedience testify against the disobedience of man.... But when they were stripped of this grace, that their disobedience might be punished by fit retribution, there began in the movement of their bodily members a shameless novelty which made nakedness indecent; it at once made them observant and made them ashamed.... Consequently all nations, being propagated from that one ~~stock~~, have so strong an instinct to cover the shameful parts, that some barbarians do not uncover them even in the bath, but wash with their drawers on."43

b. Lust, or concupiscence is another manifestation of original sin.

This is rather fully discussed in The City of God, XIV. 15-24. He thinks of lust in this connection as passionate sexual desire, at times beyond the control of the will.

"Although, therefore, lust may have many objects, yet when no object is specified, the word usually suggests to the mind the lustful excitement of the organs of generation. And this lust not only takes possession of the whole body and outward members, but also makes itself felt within, and moves the whole man with a passion in which mental emotion is mingled with bodily appetite, so that the pleasure which results is the greatest of all bodily pleasures. So possessing indeed is this pleasure, that at the moment of time in which it is consummated, all mental activity is suspended."44

"But the organs of generation are so subjected to the rule of lust, that they have no motion but what it communicates. It is this we are ashamed of; it is this which blushinglly hides from the eyes of onlookers."45

"Human nature, then, is without doubt ashamed of this lust; and justly so, for the insubordination of these members, and their defiance of the will, are the clear testimony of the punishment of man's first sin. And it was fitting that this should appear specially in those parts by which is generated that nature which has been altered for the worst by that first and great sin, -- that sin from whose evil connection no one can escape, unless God's grace expiate in him individually that which was perpetrated to the destruction of all in common, when all were in one man, and which was avenged by God's justice."46

Without the fall, propagation would have taken place just the same, but without lust.

"The man, then would have sown the seed, and the woman received it, as need required, the generative organs being moved by the will, not excited by lust... What reason is there for doubting that, before man was

involved by his sin in this weak and corruptible condition, his members might have served his will for the propagation of offspring without lust? Man has been given over to himself because he abandoned God, while he sought to be self-satisfying; and disobeying God, he could not obey even himself."47

c. Condemnation is part of the effects of the first sin.

"We on our side, indeed, can understand the apostle (Paul), and see that judgement is predicated of one offence unto condemnation entirely on the ground that, even if there were in men nothing but original sin, it would be sufficient for their condemnation. For however much heavier will be their condemnation who have added their own sins to the original offence (and it will be the more severe in individual cases, in proportion to the sins of individuals); still, even that sin alone which was originally derived unto men not only excludes from the kingdom of God, which infants are unable to enter (as they themselves allow), unless they have received the grace of Christ before they die.."48

"But because he forsook God of his free will, he experienced the just judgment of God, that with his whole race, which being as yet all placed in him and sinned with him, he should be condemned. For as many of this race as are delivered by God's grace are certainly delivered from condemnation in which they are already held bound. Whence, even if none should be delivered, no one could justly blame the judgement of God. That, therefore, in comparison of that that perish few, but in their absolute number many, are delivered, is effected by grace, is effected freely, so that no one may be lifted up as of his own deservings.."49

Even unbaptized infants are subject to mild condemnation if they die in infancy.

"It may therefore be correctly affirmed, that such infants as quit the body without being baptized will be involved in the mildest condemnation of all. That person, therefore, greatly deceives both himself and others, who teaches that they will not be involved in condemnation.."50

d. Death, both physical and eternal, is due to this original sin.

"Then also, by a certain disease which was conceived in men from a suddenly injected and pestilential corruption, it was brought about that they lost that stability of life in which they were created, and, by reason of the mutations which they experienced in the stages of life, issued at last in death."51

"For God, the author of natures, not of vices, created man upright; but man, being of his own will corrupted, and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned children. For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man, who fell into sin by the woman who was made from him before the sin. For not yet was the particular form created and distributed to us, in which we as individuals were to live,

but already the seminal nature was there from which we were to be propagated; and this being vitiated by sin, and bound by the chain of death, and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other state. And thus, from the bad use of free will, there originated the whole train of evil, which, with its concatenation of miseries, convoys the human race from its depraved origin, as from a corrupt root, on to the destruction of the second death, which has no end, those only being excepted who are freed by the grace of God."<sup>52</sup>

"When, therefore, it is asked what death it was with which God threatened our first parents if they should transgress the commandment they had received from Him, and should fail to preserve their obedience, -- whether it was the death of soul, or of body, or of the whole man, or that which is called second death, -- we must answer, It is all. For the first consists of two; the second is the complete death, which consists of all."<sup>53</sup>

"And neither the first death, which takes place when the soul is compelled to leave the body, nor the second death, which takes place when the soul is not permitted to leave the suffering body, would have been inflicted on man had no one sinned. And, of course, the mildest punishment of all will fall upon those who have added no actual sin, to the original sin they brought with them; and as for the rest who have added such actual sins, the punishment of each will be the more tolerable in the next world, according as his iniquity has been less in this world."<sup>54</sup>

e. Fault, or deterioration, is another result of original sin, and is found in all humanity.

"This wound was at that fatal moment of the fall inflicted by the devil to a vastly wider and deeper extent than are the sins which are known amongst men. Whence it came to pass that our nature having then and there been deteriorated by that great sin of the first man, not only was made a sinner, but also generates sinners; and yet the very weakness, under which the virtue of a holy life has drooped and died, is not really nature, but corruption; precisely as a bad state of health is not a bodily substance or nature, but disorder."<sup>55</sup>

f. Bondage to the devil and slavery to the self life, terminating in physical and eternal death result from original sin except for the intervention of the grace of God.

"..it was just that condemnation followed, and condemnation such that man, who by keeping the commandments should have been spiritual even in his flesh, became fleshly even in his spirit; and as in his pride he had sought to be his own satisfaction, God in His justice abandoned him to himself; not to live in the absolute independence he affected, but instead of the liberty he desired, to live dissatisfied with himself in a hard and miserable bondage to him to whom by sinning he had yielded

himself, doomed in spite of himself to die in body as he had willingly become dead in spirit, condemned even to eternal death (had not the grace of God delivered him) because he had forsaken eternal life."56

"...but if he offended the Lord his God by a proud and disobedient use of his free will, he should become subject to death, and live as the beasts do, -- the slave of appetite, and doomed to eternal punishment after death."57

4. THE PURPOSE OF EVIL. Since God had the power to prevent evil if He chosen, there must have been some purpose in His permission of evil in the universe. In the Enchiridion he says:

"For if it were not a good that evil should exist, its existence would not be permitted by the omnipotent God, who without doubt can as easily refuse to permit what He does not wish, as bringing about what He does wish..."58

"...nor would a Good Being permit evil to be done only that in His Omnipotence he can turn evil into good."59

Need to keep in mind that many evils are good in themselves, and are evil when out of their own proper places. He writes:

"This cause, however, of a good creation, namely, the goodness of God, -- this cause, I say, so just and fit which, when properly and carefully weighed, terminates all the controversies of those who inquire into the origin of the world, has not been recognized by some heretics, because there are, forsooth, many things, such as fire, frost, wild beasts, and so forth, which do not suit but injure this thin-blooded and frail mortality of our flesh, which is at present under just punishment. They do not consider how admirable these things are in their own places, how excellent in their own natures, how beautifully adjusted to the rest of creation, and how much grace they contribute to the universe by their own contributions as to a commonwealth; and how serviceable they are even to ourselves, if we use them with a knowledge of their fit adaptations."60

One of the purposes of evil is to give a greater appreciation of the good. When evil is present then the good can be compared and contrasted with and this brings a larger appreciation of the good. Thus, we find him saying:

"And in the universe, even that which is called evil, when it is regulated and put in its own place, only enhances our admiration of the good; for we enjoy and value the good more when we compare it with the



evil."<sup>61</sup>

"And the sinful will, though it violated the order of its own nature, did not on that account escape the laws of God, who justly orders all things for good. For as the beauty of a picture is increased by well-managed shadows, so, to the eye that has skill to discern it, the universe is beautified even by sinners, though, considered by themselves, their deformity is a sad blemish."<sup>62</sup>

This does not mean that evil is necessary for the existence of the good, for the good can exist perfectly independently of evil. It is only in the opposite case that the one is necessary for the other, i.e., that good is necessary for the existence of evil, for evil cannot exist separate from good.

He writes:

"But evils are so thoroughly overcome by good, that though they are permitted to exist, for the sake of demonstrating how the most righteous foresight of God can make a good use even of them, yet good can exist without evil, as in the true and supreme God Himself, and as in every invisible and visible celestial creature that exists above this murky atmosphere; but evil cannot exist without good, because the natures in which evil exists, in so far as they are natures, are good. And evil is removed, not by removing any nature, or part of a nature, which had been introduced by the evil, but by healing and correcting that which had been vitiated and depraved."<sup>63</sup>

We have already seen that God regulates evil, even though He is not the author of it. Therefore, God brings good out of evil in various ways. He says:

"For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil. For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good?"<sup>64</sup>

"...For He (God) judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit any evil to exist."<sup>65</sup>

"Nor can we doubt that God does well even in the permission of what is evil. For he permits it only in the justice of His judgement. And surely all that is just is good. Although, therefore, evil, in so far as it is evil, is not a good; yet the fact that evil as well as good exists, is a good."<sup>66</sup>

"But God, as He is the supremely good Creator of good natures, so is He

of evil wills the most just Ruler; so that, while they make an ill use of good natures, He makes a good use even of evil wills. Accordingly, He caused the devil (good by God's creation, wicked by his own will) to be cast down from his high position, and to become the mockery of His angels, -- that is, He caused his temptations to benefit those whom he wishes to injure by them."<sup>67</sup>

Nothing can hinder the will of God, and since He wills nothing but good, he brings good out of evil.

"The sins of men and angels do nothing to impede the 'great works of the Lord which accomplish His will.' For He who by His providence and omnipotence distributes to every one of his own portion, is able to make good use not only of the good, but also of the wicked. And thus making a good use of the wicked angel, who, in punishment of his first wicked volition, was doomed to an obduracy that prevents him now from willing any good, why should not God have permitted him to tempt the first man, who had been created upright, that is to say, with a good will?"<sup>68</sup>

One of the specific good coming out of evil is the conquering of the devil.

"Since, then, God was not ignorant that man would fall, why should He not have suffered him to be tempted by an angel who hated and envied him? If it was not, indeed, that He was unaware that he should be conquered, but because He foresaw that by the man's seed, aided by divine grace, this same devil himself should be conquered, to the greater glory of the saints."<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, there must be more good, or a larger good, in the universe with evil existing than if there had been no evil. McGiffert summarizes this view as follows:

"But why should God allow being to lapse and thus evil to enter the world? An answer to this question Augustine found in the Stoic notion of the universe as a harmonious whole made up of an infinite variety of parts. The charm of the world is due in some measure to the juxtaposition of opposites as language is embellished by antitheses; and even the presence of sinners enhances its beauty as shadows enhance the beauty of a picture. In this connection Augustine criticized Origen for conceiving of the world only as a place of discipline for fallen souls instead of recognizing it as wholly good because created by a good God. From Augustine's point of view, things that are evil when taken separately, are seen to be good when considered in the light of the whole. Thus while he insisted that God is not the cause of evil he maintained that he permits evil, but always and only for the sake of a larger good."<sup>70</sup>

What is true of evil is true also of the sin of men: It is overruled for the larger good. McGiffert says:

"Similarly with the evil will of men. Men, too, are created out of nothing and like everything else they tend constantly to lapse again into nothingness. This tendency reveals itself in their choice of the less instead of the greater, the choice of self instead of God, which is the essence of all sin. Only by the exercise of divine power, or the grace of God as Augustine calls it, can men be kept from sin, as only by his power can they be sustained in existence." "God is not the author of sin as he is not the author of evil of any sort. He can prevent sin if he will, but he does not always choose to do so, for sin, like evil in general, may contribute to a larger good and it is never permitted without being overruled. Thus Augustine maintained the absolute power of God, whose will is never thwarted, while at the same time he denied that God is the cause of evil or that the sins of men can be traced back to him."<sup>71</sup>

The presence of evil gives God's justice and mercy opportunity for exercise. Augustine says:

"...and the human race is so apportioned that in some is displayed the efficacy of just retribution. For both could not be displayed in all: for if all had remained under the punishment of just condemnation, there would have been in no one the mercy of redeeming grace. And, on the other hand, if all had been transferred from darkness to light, the severity of retribution would have been manifested in none."<sup>72</sup>

Evils exist for the sake of the good, for the development of man's character and the exercise of virtue, but they have come into existence as the punishment of sin, and especially of original sin. In his work On the Trinity, he writes:

"For although the death, too, of the flesh itself came originally from the sin of the first man, yet the good use of it has made most glorious martyrs. And so not only that death itself, but all the evils of this world, and the griefs and labors of men, although they come from the deserts of sins, and especially of original sin, whence life itself too became bound by the bond of death, yet have fitly remained, even when sin is forgiven; that man might have wherewith to contend for truth, and whereby the goodness of the faithful might be exercised; in order that the new man through the new covenant might be made ready among the evils of this world for a new world, by bearing wisely the misery which this condemned life deserved, and by rejoicing soberly because it will be finished, but expecting faithfully and patiently the blessedness which the future life, being set free, will have forever..... And those evils which the faithful endure piously, are of profit either for the correc-

tion of sins, or for the exercising and proving of righteousness, or to manifest the misery of this life, that the life where will be that true and perpetual blessedness may be desired more ardently, and sought out more earnestly." 73

5. THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF EVIL. It would not be fitting to leave Augustine's discussion of the problem of evil without ascertaining what he believed about the final outcome. Is evil always to remain in the universe, or is it to be finally exterminated? We have already seen that he maintained that evil is not necessary for the existence of good. Good is necessary for the existence of evil, but not vice versa. In other words, there is no eternal principle in evil. We have also seen that evil had a beginning in the evil will of God's creatures. It did not always exist. It began among angelic beings and came through one of them, the devil, into the human race. Therefore, since evil had a beginning, it would be logical to believe that it must have an end. This is Augustine's view. He foresees a time when evil will be destroyed, as follows:

"There will be at some time also the perfection of good, when the destruction of evil: the one will be highest, and the other will be no more. And if we think that this is to be hoped for in this mortal state, we are deceived. For it shall be then, when death shall not be; and it shall be there, where shall be life eternal. For in that world, and in that kingdom, there shall be highest good, no evil; when there shall be and where there shall be, highest love of wisdom, no labor of continence." 74

Evil will continue to exist during the time when men live in mortal bodies, but in that time when God's redemptive program is fully realized there will be no evil. This does not mean that punishment for sin will come to an end, for that is eternal. The evil itself will be destroyed, but punishment of creatures for their evil lives and deeds will be eternal. He writes:

"But after this life for the guilty there will remain for ever punishment for their crime: for the free there will no more remain for ever either crime or punishment: but for

Will of man  
will be free  
from evil.

Nature of  
evil,

Evil will be  
destroyed in  
us.

the good substances, spirit and flesh, will continue for ever, which God, Who is good, and incapable of change, created good although capable of change. But they will continue having been changed for the better, never from this time to be changed for the worse: All evil being utterly destroyed, both what man hath unjustly done, and what he hath unjustly suffered. And, these two kinds of evil perishing utterly, whereof the one is of iniquity going before, the other of unhappiness following after, the will of man will be upright without depravity. There it will be clear and plain to all, what now many of the faithful believe, few understand, that evil is not a substance: but that, as a wound in a body so in a substance, which hath made itself faulty, it hath begun to exist, when the disease hath commenced, and ceaseth to exist in it, when the healing hath been perfected. Therefore, all evil having arisen from us, and having been destroyed in us, our good also having been increased and perfected unto the height of most happy incorruption and immortality, of what kind shall either of our substances be?"<sup>75</sup>

Augustine's great work, The City of God, tells us in detail how this is to be accomplished. This work deals with the divine philosophy of history, and traces the course of the two cities, the city of God and the city of the devil, the world, the flesh, and of sin. The city of God, in Augustine's conception, corresponds somewhat to the modern idea of the Kingdom of God, or of the Church Universal. The earthly city originated in the love of self and contempt for God. These two cities represent the conflict between good and evil in the world. They begin in the beginning of sin in the Garden of Eden and continue until the final consummation in the Apocalypse. The two cities are intermingled in this world but will finally be separated forever. Augustine uses the Scriptures as the basis for his views concerning the course and destinies of these two cities. In Book XX he discusses the final judgment of mankind, the resurrection of the dead, the binding of the Devil, etc. In Book XXI he treats the end reserved for the city of the Devil, viz., the eternal punishment of the damned. He discusses the nature of eternal punishment, the justice of it, and why the punishment of sins lasts longer than the sins themselves lasted. In Book XXII, the closing book of The City of God,

he shows that the end of the City of God is the eternal happiness of the saints. He believes that the bodies of the saints shall be raised, no matter how disintegrated or scattered, and united into a spiritual body transformed into the likeness of Christ. In these spiritual bodies the saints shall see God, which is the beatific vision. While in this blessed state there will be no sin or evil, yet free will remains, but it is will that is truly free to refrain from sin.

"Neither are we to suppose that because sin shall have no power to delight them, free will must be withdrawn. It will, on the contrary, be all the more truly free, because set free from delight in sinning to take un-failing delight in not sinning. For the first freedom of will which man received when he was created upright consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin; whereas this last freedom of will shall be superior, inasmuch as it shall not be able to sin. This, indeed, shall not be a natural ability, but the gift of God."<sup>76</sup>

Augustine makes it clear that no evil can exist in the City of God in the final state, but Book XXI also makes it clear that the wicked and im-penitent do continue to exist for ever in eternal punishment. Evil has been excluded from the region of the blessed saints and is confined to the region of the damned. Good and evil have been entirely separated by the judgement of mankind and the assignment of each individual to his merited destiny. Evidently evil continues to exist in the evil natures of the damned. Their natures, in so far as they are natures, are good, but are utterly perverted and corrupted so that they can do nothing but harbor evil. Augustine does not make it clear whether the wicked in Hell can continue to sin or not, but since such natures are confirmed in sin and predestined to eternal existence, it would seem that they could continue to sin. The victory of God over evil is in eliminating it from the whole universe, except this one locality, which, perhaps, is comparatively small.

6. THE VALUE OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S TREATMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

It is evident that Augustine's theory of evil has very great value. For my own part, I consider it the most satisfactory solution of the problem that has been advanced up to his time, and it has been very little improved upon since. Its values appear to be as follows:

a. It is intellectually satisfying. He faces all the intellectual angles of the problem and seeks to deal with them honestly. He is profound but clear.

b. It is logically consistent. All the parts of his solution fit together. The fact of evil is frankly admitted, the sovereignty of God is fully recognized, the freedom of the creature's will is never undermined. All aspects of the problem are dealt with and fitted into a solution that does no violence to any factor. The nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of matter are all given adequate recognition.

c. It is Scripturally supported. Many theories of evil do not harmonize with the Christian Scriptures, and some disregard the Scriptures altogether. Augustine has highest reverence for the Sacred Writings and quotes them freely in support of his views. For the believer in the Scriptures, it seems to me that there is hardly any other view to hold but Augustine's.

d. It is philosophically and psychologically tenable. The negative aspect of evil is almost universally admitted. The perfect goodness and power of the Creator are harmonized with the fact of evil. Augustine's solution takes full account of the emotional conflicts and spiritual penalties involved in the experience of moral evil, or sin.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE INFLUENCE OF ST. AUGUSTINE ON ST. THOMAS AQUINAS  
REGARDING THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

It would be impossible to trace, within the scope of this study, all the ramifications of the influence of St. Augustine on those who came after him in reference to the problem of evil. However, we can say, generally speaking, that his influence was dominant. Practically all Mediaeval thinkers follow him more or less closely.

St. Anselm (1033-1109), who lived over 600 years after Augustine, and who was one of the great influences of the Middle Ages, still follows Augustine closely on the problem of evil. He taught that all essences were from God and were good, and that evil is lack of the good. Some references are: Migne, PL, 158, 438-439; Liber de Conceptu Virginale et Originale Peccato v; also Dial. de Casu Diab. ix and x; Migne, PL, 158, 337. In Migne, PL, 158, 517-518; De Concord. Praesc. Dei cum Lib. Arbitr. I.vii, he says:

"In good people God makes them to be and makes them to be good. In evil in the bad, He makes them to be but does not make them to be bad, for for everything to be just or to be good is to be something, but to no thing is it anything to be unjust or to be evil."

St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, the greatest of all Mediaeval philosophers and theologians, (1224-1274), was more a follower of Aristotle than of Plato, but still he quotes more from St. Augustine than anyone else in his treatment of evil. The influence of Plato prevailed in Mediaeval thinking up until about the beginning of the 13th century, at which time the works of Aristotle were recovered and brought into prominence through the writings of the Arabian philosophers Avicenna, Averroes, Avicembrol, and the Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides. St. Thomas was, therefore, subject to



Aristotelian influence. However, we have seen that it was to Platonic and Neo-platonic influence that Augustine was indebted for help in solving the problem of evil, and not to Aristotelian influence. St. Thomas systematized the principles of Augustine and to some extent supplemented them on this problem.

The main places in St. Thomas' writings devoted to a discussion of evil are Summa Theologica, Questions 48 and 49; Summa Contra Gentiles, III; and Quaestiones Disputatae, De Malo, I. St. Thomas teaches that evil is absence of good (S.T.I., Q. 48.1), but not mere negation (S.T.I. Q.48.5).

"Now it is in this that evil consists, namely, in the fact that a thing fails in goodness. Hence it is clear that evil is found in things, as corruption is also found; for corruption is itself an evil."<sup>1</sup>

Evil is in good as in its subject, "but not every absence of good is evil....

Absence of good taken negatively, is not evil; otherwise, it would follow that what does not exist is evil, and also that everything would be evil."<sup>2</sup>

Evil cannot wholly consume good (S.T.I., Q.48.4). Evil always lessens good, yet never wholly consumes it; while good ever remains, nothing can be wholly and perfectly bad (S.T.I., Q. 49.3) Evil in voluntary things is to be looked upon as a pain (penalty) or a fault. Fault has more evil in it than pain has (S.T.I., Q.48.6)

Evil has a cause, not a formal cause or a final cause, but an accidental or deficient cause (S.T.I., Q.48.1) God is not the cause of evil which consists in defect of action, or which is caused by defect of the agent. God is the author of evil as penalty but not of evil as fault (S.T.I., Q.49.2). There is no one first principle of evil, as there is one first principle of good (S.T.I., Q.49.3). The existence of evil is necessary for the perfection of the whole; the universe would not be as perfect if it contained no evil. For fire could not be without the corruption of what it consumes; and if there were no

wrongdoing, there would be no place for patience and justice (S.T.I.Q.48.2).

Quoting A. B. Sharpe in The Catholic Encyclopedia, in the article on Evil, St. Thomas says the following with reference to God's relation to evil:

"God is said to be the author of evil in the sense that the corruption of material objects in nature is ordained by Him, as a means for carrying out the design of the universe; and on the other hand, the evil which exists as the consequence of the breach of Divine appointment; the universe would be less perfect if its laws could be broken with impunity. Thus evil, in one aspect, i.e., as counter-balancing the deordination of sin, has the nature of good (II,Q.ii, a.19). But the evil of sin (culpa), though permitted by God, is in no sense due to Him (I,Q.xlix, a.2); its cause is the abuse of free will by angels and men (I-II,Q. lxxiii, a.6; II-II,Q.x. a.2; I-II, Q.ix, a.3). It should be observed that the universal perfection to which evil in some form is necessary, is the perfection of this universe, not of any universe; metaphysical evil, that is to say, and indirectly, moral evil as well, is included in the design of the universe which is partially known to us; but we cannot say without denying the Divine omnipotence, that another equally perfect universe could not be created in which evil would have no place. "St. Thomas also provides explanations of what are now generally considered to be the two main difficulties of the subject, viz., the Divine permission of fore-seen moral evil, and the question finally arising thence, why God chose to create anything at all. First, it is asked why God, foreseeing that His creatures would use the gift of free will for their own injury, did not either abstain from creating them, or in some way safeguard their free will from misuse, or else deny them the gift altogether? St. Thomas replies (C.G., II,xxviii) that God cannot change His mind, since the Divine will is free from the defect of weakness or mutability. Such mutability would, it should be remarked, be a defect in the Divine nature (and therefore impossible) because if God's purpose were made dependent on the foreseen free act of any creature, God would thereby sacrifice His own freedom, and would submit Himself to His creatures, thus abdicating His essential supremacy -- a thing which is, of course, utterly inconceivable. Secondly, to the question why God should have chosen to create, when creation was in no way needful for His own perfection, St. Thomas answers that God's object in creating is Himself; He creates in order to manifest His own goodness, power, and wisdom, and is pleased with that reflection or similitude of Himself in which the goodness of creation consists. God's pleasure is the one supremely perfect motive for action, alike in God Himself and in His creatures; not because of any need, or inherent necessity, in the Divine nature (C.G., I,xxviii; II,xxiii), but because God is the source, centre and object, of all existence. (I,Q.lxv, a.2; cf. Prov. 26 and Conc. Vat., can.i,v; Const. Dogm.,l.) This is accordingly the sufficient reason for the existence of the universe, and even for the suffering which moral evil has introduced into it. God has not made the world primarily for man's good, but for His own pleasure; good for man lies in conforming himself to the supreme purpose of creation, and evil in departing from it (C.G.,III,xvii,cxliv). It may further be understood from St. Thomas, that in the diversity of metaphysical evil

in which the perfection of the universe as a whole is embodied, God may see a certain similitude of His own threefold unity (cf. I, Q. xii); and again, that by permitting moral evil to exist He has provided a sphere for the manifestation of one aspect of His essential justice (cf. I, Q. lxv, a. 2; and I, Q. xxi, a. 1, 3)."<sup>3</sup>

This comparison of the thought of St. Thomas on evil with that of St. Augustine shows that they are essentially the same. On the nature of evil both agree that it is negative, or the lack of being, but the lack of being in some good. Evil cannot exist apart from the good, but there can never be evil in God. The cause of evil is the same in both. God did not create evil, but created the possibility of evil in creating everything out of nothing. The lapsing back into nothingness is evil. Moral evil in voluntary beings is the turning of such beings away from God their highest good and end to something lower. God did create evil, both agree, in the sense that He appointed pain and punishment as the inevitable result of moral evil. We find them both teaching that the effect of evil is the corruption of being, and penalty, or pain, in the case of moral beings. Both agree that God had the power to make a universe without the possibility of evil if He had chosen. Therefore, God has permitted evil because this universe is better suited to its end with evil in it than it would be without it. Evil in this universe is overruled by God for good. We are better able to see and appreciate the good when it exists intermingled with evil than if there were no evil. St. Thomas pushes the logical aspects of the problem to further limits than St. Augustine does but not beyond the implications of Augustine.

St. Thomas did not have the practical experience with evil that Augustine had, but he did have more time for study and meditation, and consequently gives a more impersonal treatment. St. Thomas was more systematic and scientific than Augustine and this appears in his arrangement of his material, but everywhere he acknowledges his heavy indebtedness to Augustine on this

problem.

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40. The Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, I.16
41. Marriage and Concupiscence, II.57
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43. City of God, XIV.17
44. Ibid., XIV.16
45. Ibid., XIV.19
46. Ibid., XIV.20
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70. McGiffert, History of Christian Thought, 89
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#### CHAPTER VI - ST. AUGUSTINE'S INFLUENCE ON ST. THOMAS

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to form, and by the readers whose names appear below,  
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